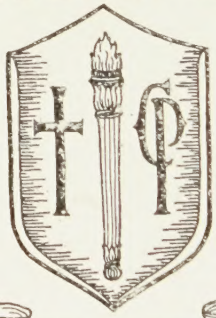
THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

COLLEGE
OF THE PACIFIC



GIFT OF
Aylwin Probert

WITHDRAWN

Oh, for a booke and a shadie nooke
Either indoors or out:
With the grene leaves whisp'ring
overhead
Or the street cryes all abroad,
Where I may read all at my ease
Both of the newe and olde:
For a jollie good booke, whereon
to looke,
Is better to me than golde.
Old English Song.

Take then, Trotwood, a gift
worth both more and less than
golde, with Jackie's best love.

May 8, 1916.

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THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

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THE PIGEON
THE FUGITIVE

MOODS, SONGS, AND DOGGERELS

College of the Pacific
Stockton, Calif.

THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

STUDIES AND ESSAYS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

"Je vous dirai que l'excès est toujours un mal."
—ANATOLE FRANCE.

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1914

gift
A. Probert

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TO

JOHN WALLER HILLS

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CONTENTS

CONCERNING LIFE

	PAGE
THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY	3
QUALITY	14
MAGPIE OVER THE HILL	26
SHEEP-SHEARING	33
EVOLUTION	40
RIDING IN MIST	47
THE PROCESSION	54
A CHRISTIAN	61
WIND IN THE ROCKS	70
MY DISTANT RELATIVE	77
THE BLACK GODMOTHER	89
THE GRAND JURY	97
GONE	113
THRESHING	120
THAT OLD-TIME PLACE	127

PAGE

ROMANCE—THREE GLEAMS 132

MEMORIES 139

FELICITY 163

CONCERNING LETTERS

A NOVELIST'S ALLEGORY 171

SOME PLATITUDES CONCERNING DRAMA . . 189

MEDITATION ON FINALITY 203

WANTED—SCHOOLING 212

ON OUR DISLIKE OF THINGS AS THEY ARE . 220

THE WINDLESTRAW 226

ABOUT CENSORSHIP 236

VAGUE THOUGHTS ON ART 254

CONCERNING LIFE

THE INN OF TRANQUILLITY

UNDER a burning blue sky, among the pine-trees and junipers, the cypresses and olives of that Odyssean coast, we came one afternoon on a pink house bearing the legend: "Osteria di Tranquillità"; and, partly because of the name, and partly because we did not expect to find a house at all in those goat-haunted groves above the waves, we tarried for contemplation. To the familiar simplicity of that Italian building there were not lacking signs of a certain spiritual change, for out of the olive-grove which grew to its very doors a skittle-alley had been formed, and two baby cypress-trees were cut into the effigies of a cock and hen. The song of a gramophone, too, was breaking forth into the air, as it were the presiding voice of a high and cosmopolitan mind. And, lost in admiration, we became conscious of the odour of a full-flavoured cigar. Yes—in the skittle-alley a gentleman was standing who wore a bowler hat, a bright brown suit, pink tie, and very yellow boots. His head was round, his cheeks fat and well-coloured, his

lips red and full under a black moustache, and he was regarding us through very thick and half-closed eyelids.

Perceiving him to be the proprietor of the high and cosmopolitan mind, we accosted him.

"Good-day!" he replied: "I spik English. Been in Amurrica—yes."

"You have a lovely place here."

Sweeping a glance over the skittle-alley, he sent forth a long puff of smoke; then, turning to my companion (of the politer sex) with the air of one who has made himself perfect master of a foreign tongue, he smiled, and spoke.

"Too—quiet!"

"Precisely; the name of your inn, perhaps, suggests——"

"I change all that—soon I call it Anglo-American hotel."

"Ah! yes; you are very up-to-date already."

He closed one eye and smiled.

Having passed a few more compliments, we saluted and walked on; and, coming presently to the edge of the cliff, lay down on the thyme and the crumbled leaf-dust. All the small singing birds had long been shot and eaten; there came to us no sound but that of the waves swimming in on a gentle south wind. The wanton creatures

seemed stretching out white arms to the land, flying desperately from a sea of such stupendous serenity; and over their bare shoulders their hair floated back, pale in the sunshine. If the air was void of sound, it was full of scent—that delicious and enlivening perfume of mingled gum, and herbs, and sweet wood being burned somewhere a long way off; and a silky, golden warmth slanted on to us through the olives and umbrella pines. Large wine-red violets were growing near. On such a cliff might Theocritus have lain, spinning his songs; on that divine sea Odysseus should have passed. And we felt that presently the goat-god must put his head forth from behind a rock.

It seemed a little queer that our friend in the bowler hat should move and breathe within one short flight of a cuckoo from this home of Pan. One could not but at first feelingly remember the old Boer saying: "O God, what things man sees when he goes out without a gun!" But soon the infinite incongruity of this juxtaposition began to produce within one a curious eagerness, a sort of half-philosophical delight. It began to seem too good, almost too romantic, to be true. To think of the gramophone wedded to the thin sweet singing of the olive leaves in the evening wind; to

remember the scent of his rank cigar marrying with this wild incense; to read that enchanted name, "Inn of Tranquillity," and hear the bland and affable remark of the gentleman who owned it—such were, indeed, phenomena to stimulate souls to speculation. And all unconsciously one began to justify them by thoughts of the other incongruities of existence—the strange, the passionate incongruities of youth and age, wealth and poverty, life and death; the wonderful odd bedfellows of this world; all those lurid contrasts which haunt a man's spirit till sometimes he is ready to cry out: "Rather than live where such things can be, let me die!"

Like a wild bird tracking through the air, one's meditation wandered on, following that trail of thought, till the chance encounter became spiritually luminous. That Italian gentleman of the world, with his bowler hat, his skittle-alley, his gramophone, who had planted himself down in this temple of wild harmony, was he not Progress itself—the blind figure with the stomach full of new meats and the brain of raw notions? Was he not the very embodiment of the wonderful child, Civilisation, so possessed by a new toy each day that she has no time to master its use—naïve creature lost amid her own discoveries!

Was he not the very symbol of that which was making economists thin, thinkers pale, artists haggard, statesmen bald—the symbol of Indigestion Incarnate! Did he not, delicious, gross, unconscious man, personify beneath his Americo-Italian polish all those rank and primitive instincts, whose satisfaction necessitated the million miseries of his fellows; all those thick rapacities which stir the hatred of the humane and thin-skinned! And yet, one's meditation could not stop there—it was not convenient to the heart!

A little above us, among the olive-trees, two blue-clothed peasants, man and woman, were gathering the fruit—from some such couple, no doubt, our friend in the bowler hat had sprung; more "virile" and adventurous than his brothers, he had not stayed in the home groves, but had gone forth to drink the waters of hustle and commerce, and come back—what he was. And he, in turn, would beget children, and having made his pile out of his 'Anglo-American hotel' would place those children beyond the coarser influences of life, till they became, perhaps, even as ourselves, the salt of the earth, and despised him. And I thought: "I do not despise those peasants—far from it. I do not despise myself—no more than reason; why, then, despise my friend in the

bowler hat, who is, after all, but the necessary link between them and me?" I did not despise the olive-trees, the warm sun, the pine scent, all those material things which had made him so thick and strong; I did not despise the golden, tenuous imaginings which the trees and rocks and sea were starting in my own spirit. Why, then, despise the skittle-alley, the gramophone, those expressions of the spirit of my friend in the billy-cock hat? To despise them was ridiculous!

And suddenly I was visited by a sensation only to be described as a sort of smiling certainty, emanating from, and, as it were, still tingling within every nerve of myself, but yet vibrating harmoniously with the world around. It was as if I had suddenly seen what was the truth of things; not perhaps to anybody else, but at all events to me. And I felt at once tranquil and elated, as when something is met with which rouses and fascinates in a man all his faculties.

"For," I thought, "if it is ridiculous in me to despise my friend—that perfect marvel of disharmony—it is ridiculous in me to despise anything. If *he* is a little bit of continuity, as perfectly logical an expression of a necessary phase or mood of existence as I myself am, then, surely, there is nothing in all the world that is not a little

bit of continuity, the expression of a little necessary mood. Yes," I thought, "he and I, and those olive-trees, and this spider on my hand, and everything in the Universe which has an individual shape, are all fit expressions of the separate moods of a great underlying Mood or Principle, which must be perfectly adjusted, volving and revolving on itself. For if It did not volve and revolve on Itself, It would peter out at one end or the other, and the image of this petering out no man with his mental apparatus can conceive. Therefore, one must conclude It to be perfectly adjusted and everlasting. But if It is perfectly adjusted and everlasting, we are all little bits of continuity, and if we are all little bits of continuity it is ridiculous for one of us to despise another. So," I thought, "I have now proved it from my friend in the billy-cock hat up to the Universe, and from the Universe down, back again to my friend."

And I lay on my back and looked at the sky. It seemed friendly to my thought with its smile, and few white clouds, saffron-tinged like the plumes of a white duck in sunlight. "And yet," I wondered, "though my friend and I may be equally necessary, I am certainly irritated by him, and shall as certainly continue to be irritated, not only by him, but by a thousand other men and

things. And as to the things that I love and admire, am I to suppress these loves and admirations because I know them merely to be the necessary expressions of the moods of an underlying Principle that turns and turns on Itself? Does not this way nullity lie?" But then I thought: "Not so; for you cannot believe in the great adjusted Mood or Principle without believing in each little and individual part of It. And you are yourself a little individual part; therefore you must believe in that little individual part which is *you*, with all its natural likings and dislikings, and, indeed, you cannot show your belief except by expression of those likings and dislikings. And so, with a light heart, you may go on being irritated with your friend in the bowler hat, you may go on loving those peasants and this sky and sea. But, since you have this theory of life, *you may not despise* any one or any thing, not even a skittle-alley, for they are all threaded to you, and to despise them would be to blaspheme against continuity, and to blaspheme against continuity would be to deny Eternity. Love you cannot help, and hate you cannot help; but contempt is—for you—the sovereign idiocy, the irreligious fancy!"

There was a bee weighing down a blossom of thyme close by, and underneath the stalk a very

ugly little centipede. The wild bee, with his little dark body and his busy bear's legs, was lovely to me, and the creepy centipede gave me shudderings; but it was a pleasant thing to feel so sure that he, no less than the bee, was a little mood expressing himself out in harmony with Design—a tiny thread on the miraculous quilt. And I looked at him with a sudden zest and curiosity; it seemed to me that in the mystery of his queer little creepings I was enjoying the Supreme Mystery; and I thought: "If I knew all about that wriggling beast, then, indeed, I might despise him; but, truly, *if* I knew all about him I should know all about everything—Mystery would be gone, and I could not bear to live!"

So I stirred him with my finger and he went away.

"But how"—I thought—"about such as do not feel it ridiculous to despise; how about those whose temperaments and religions show them all things so plainly that they know they are right and others wrong? They must be in a bad way!" And for some seconds I felt sorry for them, and was discouraged. But then I thought: "Not at all—obviously not! For if they do not find it ridiculous to feel contempt, they are perfectly right to feel contempt, it being natural to them;

and you have no business to be sorry for them, for that is, after all, only your euphemism for contempt. They are all right, being the expressions of contemptuous moods, having religions and so forth, suitable to these moods; and the religion of your mood would be Greek to them, and probably a matter for contempt. But this only makes it the more interesting. For though to you, for instance, it may seem impossible to worship Mystery with one lobe of the brain, and with the other to explain it, the thought that this may not seem impossible to others should not discourage you; it is but another little piece of that Mystery which makes life so wonderful and sweet."

The sun, fallen now almost to the level of the cliff, was slanting upward on to the burnt-red pine boughs, which had taken to themselves a quaint resemblance to the great brown limbs of the wild men Titian drew in his pagan pictures, and down below us the sea-nymphs, still swimming to shore, seemed eager to embrace them in the enchanted groves. All was fused in that golden glow of the sun going down—sea and land gathered into one transcendent mood of light and colour, as if Mystery desired to bless us by showing how perfect was that worshipful adjustment,

whose secret we could never know. And I said to myself: "None of those thoughts of yours are new, and in a vague way even you have thought them before; but all the same, they have given you some little feeling of tranquillity."

And at that word of fear I rose and invited my companion to return toward the town. But as we stealthily crept by the "Osteria di Tranquillità," our friend in the bowler hat came out with a gun over his shoulder and waved his hand toward the Inn.

"You come again in two week—I change all that! And now," he added, "I go to shoot little bird or two," and he disappeared into the golden haze under the olive-trees.

A minute later we heard his gun go off, and returned homeward with a prayer.

1910.

QUALITY

I KNEW him from the days of my extreme youth, because he made my father's boots; inhabiting with his elder brother two little shops let into one, in a small by-street—now no more, but then most fashionably placed in the West End.

That tenement had a certain quiet distinction; there was no sign upon its face that he made for any of the Royal Family—merely his own German name of Gessler Brothers; and in the window a few pairs of boots. I remember that it always troubled me to account for those unvarying boots in the window, for he made only what was ordered, reaching nothing down, and it seemed so inconceivable that what he made could ever have failed to fit. Had he bought them to put there? That, too, seemed inconceivable. He would never have tolerated in his house leather on which he had not worked himself. Besides, they were too beautiful—the pair of pumps, so inexpressibly slim, the patent leathers with cloth tops, making water come into one's mouth, the tall brown riding boots with marvellous sooty glow,

as if, though new, they had been worn a hundred years. Those pairs could only have been made by one who saw before him the Soul of Boot—so truly were they prototypes incarnating the very spirit of all foot-gear. These thoughts, of course, came to me later, though even when I was promoted to him, at the age of perhaps fourteen, some inkling haunted me of the dignity of himself and brother. For to make boots—such boots as he made—seemed to me then, and still seems to me, mysterious and wonderful.

I remember well my shy remark, one day, while stretching out to him my youthful foot:

"Isn't it awfully hard to do, Mr. Gessler?"

And his answer, given with a sudden smile from out of the sardonic redness of his beard: "Id is an Ardt!"

Himself, he was a little as if made from leather, with his yellow crinkly face, and crinkly reddish hair and beard, and neat folds slanting down his cheeks to the corners of his mouth, and his guttural and one-toned voice; for leather is a sardonic substance, and stiff and slow of purpose. And that was the character of his face, save that his eyes, which were grey-blue, had in them the simple gravity of one secretly possessed by the Ideal. His elder brother was so very like him—though

watery, paler in every way, with a great industry —that sometimes in early days I was not quite sure of him until the interview was over. Then I knew that it was he, if the words, "I will ask my brudder," had not been spoken; and that, if they had, it was his elder brother.

When one grew old and wild and ran up bills, one somehow never ran them up with Gessler Brothers. It would not have seemed becoming to go in there and stretch out one's foot to that blue iron-spectacled glance, owing him for more than—say—two pairs, just the comfortable reassurance that one was still his client.

For it was not possible to go to him very often —his boots lasted terribly, having something beyond the temporary—some, as it were, essence of boot stitched into them.

One went in, not as into most shops, in the mood of: "Please serve me, and let me go!" but restfully, as one enters a church; and, sitting on the single wooden chair, waited—for there was never anybody there. Soon, over the top edge of that sort of well—rather dark, and smelling soothingly of leather—which formed the shop, there would be seen his face, or that of his elder brother, peering down. A guttural sound, and the tip-tap of bast slippers beating the narrow

wooden stairs, and he would stand before one without coat, a little bent, in leather apron, with sleeves turned back, blinking—as if awakened from some dream of boots, or like an owl surprised in daylight and annoyed at this interruption.

And I would say: "How do you do, Mr. Gessler? Could you make me a pair of Russia leather boots?"

Without a word he would leave me, retiring whence he came, or into the other portion of the shop, and I would continue to rest in the wooden chair, inhaling the incense of his trade. Soon he would come back, holding in his thin, veined hand a piece of gold-brown leather. With eyes fixed on it, he would remark: "What a beaudiful biece!" When I, too, had admired it, he would speak again. "When do you wand dem?" And I would answer: "Oh! As soon as you conveniently can." And he would say: "To-morrow fordnighd?" Or if he were his elder brother: "I will ask my brudder!"

Then I would murmur: "Thank you! Good-morning, Mr. Gessler." "Goot-morning!" he would reply, still looking at the leather in his hand. And as I moved to the door, I would hear the tip-tap of his bast slippers restoring him, up

the stairs, to his dream of boots. But if it were some new kind of foot-gear that he had not yet made me, then indeed he would observe ceremony —divesting me of my boot and holding it long in his hand, looking at it with eyes at once critical and loving, as if recalling the glow with which he had created it, and rebuking the way in which one had disorganized this masterpiece. Then, placing my foot on a piece of paper, he would two or three times tickle the outer edges with a pencil and pass his nervous fingers over my toes, feeling himself into the heart of my requirements.

I cannot forget that day on which I had occasion to say to him: "Mr. Gessler, that last pair of town walking-boots creaked, you know."

He looked at me for a time without replying, as if expecting me to withdraw or qualify the statement, then said:

"Id shouldn'd 'ave greaked."

"It did, I'm afraid."

"You goddem wed before dey found demselves?"

"I don't think so."

At that he lowered his eyes, as if hunting for memory of those boots, and I felt sorry I had mentioned this grave thing.

"Zend dem back!" he said; "I will look at dem."

A feeling of compassion for my creaking boots surged up in me, so well could I imagine the sorrowful long curiosity of regard which he would bend on them.

"Zome boods," he said slowly, "are bad from birdt. If I can do noding wid dem, I dake dem off your bill."

Once (once only) I went absent-mindedly into his shop in a pair of boots bought in an emergency at some large firm's. He took my order without showing me any leather, and I could feel his eyes penetrating the inferior integument of my foot. At last he said:

"Dose are nod my boods."

The tone was not one of anger, nor of sorrow, not even of contempt, but there was in it something quiet that froze the blood. He put his hand down and pressed a finger on the place where the left boot, endeavouring to be fashionable, was not quite comfortable.

"Id 'urds you dere," he said. "Dose big virms 'ave no self-respect. Drash!" And then, as if something had given way within him, he spoke long and bitterly. It was the only time I ever heard him discuss the conditions and hardships of his trade.

"Dey get id all," he said, "dey get id by ad-

verdisement, nod by work. Dey dake it away from us, who lofe our boods. Id gomes to this —bresently I haf no work. Every year id gets less—you will see." And looking at his lined face I saw things I had never noticed before, bitter things and bitter struggle—and what a lot of grey hairs there seemed suddenly in his red beard!

As best I could, I explained the circumstances of the purchase of those ill-omened boots. But his face and voice made so deep impression that during the next few minutes I ordered many pairs. Nemesis fell! They lasted more terribly than ever. And I was not able conscientiously to go to him for nearly two years.

When at last I went I was surprised to find that outside one of the two little windows of his shop another name was painted, also that of a boot-maker—making, of course, for the Royal Family. The old familiar boots, no longer in dignified isolation, were huddled in the single window. Inside, the now contracted well of the one little shop was more scented and darker than ever. And it was longer than usual, too, before a face peered down, and the tip-tap of the bast slippers began. At last he stood before me, and, gazing through those rusty iron spectacles, said:

"Mr. ——, isn'd it?"

"Ah! Mr. Gessler," I stammered, "but your boots are really *too* good, you know! See, these are quite decent still!" And I stretched out to him my foot. He looked at it.

"Yes," he said, "beople do nod wand good boods, id seems."

To get away from his reproachful eyes and voice I hastily remarked: "What have you done to your shop?"

He answered quietly: "Id was too exbensif. Do you wand some boods?"

I ordered three pairs, though I had only wanted two, and quickly left. I had, I do not know quite what feeling of being part, in his mind, of a conspiracy against him; or not perhaps so much against him as against his idea of boot. One does not, I suppose, care to feel like that; for it was again many months before my next visit to his shop, paid, I remember, with the feeling: "Oh! well, I can't leave the old boy—so here goes! Perhaps it'll be his elder brother!"

For his elder brother, I knew, had not character enough to reproach me, even dumbly.

And, to my relief, in the shop there did appear to be his elder brother, handling a piece of leather.

"Well, Mr. Gessler," I said, "how are you?"

He came close, and peered at me.

"I am breddy well," he said slowly· "but my elder brudder is dead."

And I saw that it was indeed himself—but how aged and wan! And never before had I heard him mention his brother. Much shocked, I murmured: "Oh! I am sorry!"

"Yes," he answered, "he was a good man, he made a good bood; but he is dead." And he touched the top of his head, where the hair had suddenly gone as thin as it had been on that of his poor brother, to indicate, I suppose, the cause of death. "He could nod ged over losing de oder shop. Do you wand any boods?" And he held up the leather in his hand: "Id's a beaudiful biece."

I ordered several pairs. It was very long before they came—but they were better than ever. One simply could not wear them out. And soon after that I went abroad.

It was over a year before I was again in London. And the first shop I went to was my old friend's. I had left a man of sixty, I came back to one of seventy-five, pinched and worn and tremulous, who genuinely, this time, did not at first know me.

"Oh! Mr. Gessler," I said, sick at heart; "how

splendid your boots are! See, I've been wearing this pair nearly all the time I've been abroad; and they're not half worn out, are they?"

He looked long at my boots—a pair of Russia leather, and his face seemed to regain steadiness. Putting his hand on my instep, he said:

"Do dey vid you here? I 'ad drouble wid dat bair, I remember."

I assured him that they had fitted beautifully.

"Do you wand any boods?" he said. "I can make dem quickly; id is a slack dime."

I answered: "Please, please! I want boots all round—every kind!"

"I will make a vresh model. Your food must be bigger." And with utter slowness, he traced round my foot, and felt my toes, only once looking up to say:

"Did I dell you my brudder was dead?"

To watch him was painful, so feeble had he grown; I was glad to get away.

I had given those boots up, when one evening they came. Opening the parcel, I set the four pairs out in a row. Then one by one I tried them on. There was no doubt about it. In shape and fit, in finish and quality of leather, they were the best he had ever made me. And in the mouth of one of the Town walking-boots I found his bill.

The amount was the same as usual, but it gave me quite a shock. He had never before sent it in till quarter day. I flew down-stairs, and wrote a cheque, and posted it at once with my own hand.

A week later, passing the little street, I thought I would go in and tell him how splendidly the new boots fitted. But when I came to where his shop had been, his name was gone. Still there, in the window, were the slim pumps, the patent leathers with cloth tops, the sooty riding boots.

I went in, very much disturbed. In the two little shops—again made into one—was a young man with an English face.

"Mr. Gessler in?" I said.

He gave me a strange, ingratiating look.

"No, sir," he said, "no. But we can attend to anything with pleasure. We've taken the shop over. You've seen our name, no doubt, next door. We make for some very good people."

"Yes, yes," I said; "but Mr. Gessler?"

"Oh!" he answered; "dead."

"Dead! But I only received these boots from him last Wednesday week."

"Ah!" he said; "a shockin' go. Poor old man starved 'imself."

"Good God!"

"Slow starvation, the doctor called it! You

see he went to work in such a way! Would keep the shop on; wouldn't have a soul touch his boots except himself. When he got an order, it took him such a time. People won't wait. He lost everybody. And there he'd sit, goin' on and on —I will say that for him—not a man in London made a better boot! But look at the competition! He never advertised! Would 'ave the best leather, too, and do it all 'imself. Well, there it is. What could you expect with his ideas?"

"But starvation——!"

"That may be a bit flowery, as the sayin' is—but I know myself he was sittin' over his boots day and night, to the very last. You see I used to watch him. Never gave 'imself time to eat; never had a penny in the house. All went in rent and leather. How he lived so long I don't know. He regular let his fire go out. He was a character. But he made good boots."

"Yes," I said, "he made good boots."

And I turned and went out quickly, for I did not want that youth to know that I could hardly see.

1911.

MAGPIE OVER THE HILL

I LAY often that summer on a slope of sand and coarse grass, close to the Cornish sea, trying to catch thoughts; and I was trying very hard when I saw them coming hand in hand.

She was dressed in blue linen, and a little cloud of honey-coloured hair; her small face had serious eyes the colour of the chicory flowers she was holding up to sniff at—a clean sober little maid, with a very touching upward look of trust. Her companion was a strong, active boy of perhaps fourteen, and he, too, was serious—his deep-set, black-lashed eyes looked down at her with a queer protective wonder, the while he explained in a soft voice broken up between two ages, that exact process which bees adopt to draw honey out of flowers. Once or twice this hoarse but charming voice became quite fervent, when she had evidently failed to follow; it was as if he would have been impatient, only he knew he must not, because she was a lady and younger than himself, and he loved her.

They sat down just below my nook, and began

to count the petals of a chicory flower, and slowly she nestled in to him, and he put his arm round her. Never did I see such sedate, sweet lovering, so trusting on her part, so guardianlike on his. They were like, in miniature—though more dewy, —those sober couples who have long lived together, yet whom one still catches looking at each other with confidential tenderness, and in whom, one feels, passion is atrophied from never having been in use.

Long I sat watching them in their cool communion, half-embraced, talking a little, smiling a little, never once kissing. They did not seem shy of that; it was rather as if they were too much each other's to think of such a thing. And then her head slid lower and lower down his shoulder, and sleep buttoned the lids over those chicory-blue eyes. How careful he was, then, not to wake her, though I could see his arm was getting stiff! He still sat, good as gold, holding her, till it began quite to hurt me to see his shoulder thus in chancery. But presently I saw him draw his arm away ever so carefully, lay her head down on the grass, and lean forward to stare at something. Straight in front of them was a magpie, balancing itself on a stripped twig of thorn-tree. The agitating bird, painted of night and day, was

making a queer noise and flirting one wing, as if trying to attract attention. Rising from the twig, it circled, vivid and stealthy, twice round the tree, and flew to another a dozen paces off. The boy rose; he looked at his little mate, looked at the bird, and began quietly to move toward it; but uttering again its queer call, the bird glided on to a third thorn-tree. The boy hesitated then—but once more the bird flew on, and suddenly dipped over the hill. I saw the boy break into a run; and getting up quickly, I ran too.

When I reached the crest there was the black and white bird flying low into a dell, and there the boy, with hair streaming back, was rushing helter-skelter down the hill. He reached the bottom and vanished into the dell. I, too, ran down the hill. For all that I was prying and must not be seen by bird or boy, I crept warily in among the trees to the edge of a pool that could know but little sunlight, so thickly arched was it by willows, birch-trees, and wild hazel. There, in a swing of boughs above the water, was perched no pied bird, but a young, dark-haired girl with dangling, bare, brown legs. And on the brink of the black water goldened with fallen leaves, the boy was crouching, gazing up at her with all his

soul. She swung just out of reach and looked down at him across the pool. How old was she, with her brown limbs, and her gleaming, slanting eyes? Or was she only the spirit of the dell, this elf-thing swinging there, entwined with boughs and the dark water, and covered with a shift of wet birch leaves. So strange a face she had, wild, almost wicked, yet so tender; a face that I could not take my eyes from. Her bare toes just touched the pool, and flicked up drops of water that fell on the boy's face.

From him all the sober steadfastness was gone; already he looked as wild as she, and his arms were stretched out trying to reach her feet. I wanted to cry to him: "Go back, boy, go back!" but could not; her elf eyes held me dumb—they looked so lost in their tender wildness.

And then my heart stood still, for he had slipped and was struggling in deep water beneath her feet. What a gaze was that he was turning up to her—not frightened, but so longing, so desperate; and hers—how triumphant, and how happy!

And then he clutched her foot, and clung, and climbed; and bending down, she drew him up to her, all wet, and clasped him in the swing of boughs.

I took a long breath then. An orange gleam of sunlight had flamed in among the shadows and fell round those two where they swung over the dark water, with lips close together and spirits lost in one another's, and in their eyes such drowning ecstasy! And then—they kissed! All round me pool, and leaves, and air seemed suddenly to swirl and melt—I could see nothing plain! . . . What time passed—I do not know—before their faces slowly again became visible! His face—the sober boy's—was turned away from her, and he was listening; for above the whispering of leaves a sound of weeping came from over the hill. It was to that he listened.

And even as I looked he slid down from out of her arms, back into the pool, and began struggling to gain the edge. What grief and longing in her wild face then! But she did not wail. She did not try to pull him back; that elfish heart of dignity could reach out to what was coming, it could not drag at what was gone. Unmoving as the boughs and water, she watched him abandon her.

Slowly the struggling boy gained land, and lay there, breathless. And still that sound of lonely weeping came from over the hill.

Listening, but looking at those wild, mourning eyes that never moved from him, he lay. Once

he turned back toward the water, but fire had died within him; his hands dropped, nerveless—his young face was all bewilderment.

And the quiet darkness of the pool waited, and the trees, and those lost eyes of hers, and my heart. And ever from over the hill came the little fair maiden's lonely weeping.

Then, slowly dragging his feet, stumbling, half-blinded, turning and turning to look back, the boy groped his way out through the trees toward that sound; and, as he went, that dark spirit-elf, abandoned, clasping her own lithe body with her arms, never moved her gaze from him.

I, too, crept away, and when I was safe outside in the pale evening sunlight, peered back into the dell. There under the dark trees she was no longer, but round and round that cage of passion, fluttering and wailing through the leaves, over the black water, was the magpie, flighting on its twilight wings.

I turned and ran and ran till I came over the hill and saw the boy and the little fair, sober maiden sitting together once more on the open slope, under the high blue heaven. She was nestling her tear-stained face against his shoulder and speaking already of indifferent things. And he—he was holding her with his arm and watch-

ing over her with eyes that seemed to see something else.

And so I lay, hearing their sober talk and gazing at their sober little figures, till I awoke and knew I had dreamed all that little allegory of sacred and profane love, and from it had returned to reason, knowing no more than ever which was which.

1912.

SHEEP-SHEARING

FROM early morning there had been bleating of sheep in the yard, so that one knew the creatures were being sheared, and toward evening I went along to see. Thirty or forty naked-looking ghosts of sheep were penned against the barn, and perhaps a dozen still inhabiting their coats. Into the wool of one of these bulky ewes the farmer's small, yellow-haired daughter was twisting her fist, hustling it toward Fate; though pulled almost off her feet by the frightened, stubborn creature, she never let go, till, with a despairing cough, the ewe had passed over the threshold and was fast in the hands of a shearer. At the far end of the barn, close by the doors, I stood a minute or two before shifting up to watch the shearing. Into that dim, beautiful home of age, with its great rafters and mellow stone archways, the June sunlight shone through loopholes and chinks, in thin glamour, powdering with its very strangeness the dark cathedraled air, where, high up, clung a fog of old grey cobwebs so thick as ever were the stalactites of a huge cave. At

this end the scent of sheep and wool and men had not yet routed that home essence of the barn, like the savour of acorns and withering beech leaves.

They were shearing by hand this year, nine of them, counting the postman, who, though farm-bred, "did'n putt much to the shearin'," but had come to round the sheep up and give general aid.

Sitting on the creatures, or with a leg firmly crooked over their heads, each shearer, even the two boys, had an air of going at it in his own way. In their white canvas shearing suits they worked very steadily, almost in silence, as if drowsed by the "click-clip, click-clip" of the shears. And the sheep, but for an occasional wriggle of legs or head, lay quiet enough, having an inborn sense perhaps of the fitness of things, even when, once in a way, they lost more than wool; glad too, mayhap, to be rid of their matted vestments. From time to time the little damsel offered each shearer a jug and glass, but no man drank till he had finished his sheep; then he would get up, stretch his cramped muscles, drink deep, and almost instantly sit down again on a fresh beast. And always there was the buzz of flies swarming in the sunlight of the open doorway, the dry rustle of the pollarded lime-trees in the sharp wind

outside, the bleating of some released ewe, upset at her own nakedness, the scrape and shuffle of heels and sheep's limbs on the floor, together with the "click-clip, click-clip" of the shears.

As each ewe, finished with, struggled up, helped by a friendly shove, and bolted out dazedly into the pen, I could not help wondering what was passing in her head—in the heads of all those unceremoniously treated creatures; and, moving nearer to the postman, I said:

"They're really very good, on the whole."

He looked at me, I thought, queerly.

"Yaas," he answered; "Mr. Molton's the best of them."

I looked askance at Mr. Molton; but, with his knee crooked round a young ewe, he was shearing calmly.

"Yes," I admitted, "he is certainly good."

"Yaas," replied the postman.

Edging back into the darkness, away from that uncomprehending youth, I escaped into the air, and passing the remains of last year's stacks under the tall, toppling elms, sat down in a field under the bank. It seemed to me that I had food for thought. In that little misunderstanding between me and the postman was all the essence of the difference between that state of civilisation in

which sheep could prompt a sentiment, and that state in which sheep could not.

The heat from the dropping sun, not far now above the moorline, struck full into the ferns and long grass of the bank where I was sitting, and the midges rioted on me in this last warmth. The wind was barred out, so that one had the full sweetness of the clover, fast becoming hay, over which the swallows were wheeling and swooping after flies. And far up, as it were the crown of Nature's beautiful devouring circle, a buzzard hawk, almost stationary on the air, floated, intent on something pleasant below him. A number of little hens crept through the gate one by one, and came round me. It seemed to them that I was there to feed them; and they held their neat red or yellow heads to one side and the other, inquiring with their beady eyes, surprised at my stillness. They were pretty with their speckled feathers, and as it seemed to me, plump and young, so that I wondered how many of them would in time feed me. Finding, however, that I gave them nothing to eat, they went away, and there arose, in place of their clucking, the thin singing of air passing through some long tube. I knew it for the whining of my dog, who had nosed me out, but could not get through the pad-

locked gate. And as I lifted him over, I was glad the postman could not see me—for I felt that to lift a dog over a gate would be against the principles of one for whom the connection of sheep with good behaviour had been too strange a thought. And it suddenly rushed into my mind that the time would no doubt come when the conduct of apples, being plucked from the mother tree, would inspire us, and we should say: "They're really very good!" And I wondered, were those future watchers of apple-gathering farther from me than I, watching sheep-shearing, from the postman? I thought, too, of the pretty dreams being dreamt about the land, and of the people who dreamed them. And I looked at that land, covered with the sweet pinkish-green of the clover, and considered how much of it, through the medium of sheep, would find its way into me, to enable me to come out here and be eaten by midges, and speculate about things, and conceive the sentiment of how good the sheep were. And it all seemed queer. I thought, too, of a world entirely composed of people who could see the sheen rippling on that clover, and feel a sort of sweet elation at the scent of it, and I wondered how much clover would be sown then? Many things I thought of, sitting there, till the sun sank below the moor-

line, the wind died off the clover, and the midges slept. Here and there in the iris-coloured sky a star crept out; the soft-hooting owls awoke. But still I lingered, watching how, one after another, shapes and colours died into twilight; and I wondered what the postman thought of twilight, that inconvenient state, when things were neither dark nor light; and I wondered what the sheep were thinking this first night without their coats. Then, slinking along the hedge, noiseless, unheard by my sleeping spaniel, I saw a tawny dog stealing by. He passed without seeing us, licking his lean chops.

"Yes, friend," I thought, "you have been after something very unholy; you have been digging up buried lamb, or some desirable person of that kind!"

Sneaking past, in this sweet night, which stirred in one such sentiment, that ghoulish cur was like the omnivorousness of Nature. And it came to me, how wonderful and queer was a world which embraced within it, not only this red gloating dog, fresh from his feast on the decaying flesh of lamb, but all those hundreds of beings in whom the sight of a fly with one leg shortened produced a quiver of compassion. For in this savage, slinking shadow, I knew that I had beheld a manifestation of divinity no less than in the smile of the

sky, each minute growing more starry. With what Harmony—I thought—can these two be enwrapped in this round world so fast that it cannot be moved! What secret, marvellous, all-pervading Principle can harmonise these things! And the old words 'good' and 'evil' seemed to me more than ever quaint.

It was almost dark, and the dew falling fast; I roused my spaniel to go in.

Over the high-walled yard, the barns, the moon-white porch, dusk had brushed its velvet. Through an open window came a roaring sound. Mr. Molton was singing "The Happy Warrior," to celebrate the finish of the shearing. The big doors into the garden, passed through, cut off the full sweetness of that song; for there the owls were already masters of night with their music.

On the dew-whitened grass of the lawn, we came on a little dark beast. My spaniel, liking its savour, stood with his nose at point; but, being called off, I could feel him obedient, still quivering, under my hand.

In the field, a wan huddle in the blackness, the dismantled sheep lay under a holly hedge. The wind had died; it was mist-warm.

1910.

EVOLUTION

COMING out of the theatre, we found it utterly impossible to get a taxicab; and, though it was raining slightly, walked through Leicester Square in the hope of picking one up as it returned down Piccadilly. Numbers of hansoms and four-wheelers passed, or stood by the curb, hailing us feebly, or not even attempting to attract our attention, but every taxi seemed to have its load. At Piccadilly Circus, losing patience, we beckoned to a four-wheeler and resigned ourselves to a long, slow journey. A sou'-westerly air blew through the open windows, and there was in it the scent of change, that wet scent which visits even the hearts of towns and inspires the watcher of their myriad activities with thought of the restless Force that forever cries: "On, on!" But gradually the steady patter of the horse's hoofs, the rattling of the windows, the slow thudding of the wheels, pressed on us so drowsily that when, at last, we reached home we were more than half asleep. The fare was two shillings, and, standing in the lamplight to make sure the coin

was a half-crown before handing it to the driver, we happened to look up. This cabman appeared to be a man of about sixty, with a long, thin face, whose chin and drooping grey moustaches seemed in permanent repose on the up-turned collar of his old blue overcoat. But the remarkable features of his face were the two furrows down his cheeks, so deep and hollow that it seemed as though that face were a collection of bones without coherent flesh, among which the eyes were sunk back so far that they had lost their lustre. He sat quite motionless, gazing at the tail of his horse. And, almost unconsciously, one added the rest of one's silver to that half-crown. He took the coins without speaking; but, as we were turning into the garden gate, we heard him say:

"Thank you; you've saved my life."

Not knowing, either of us, what to reply to such a curious speech, we closed the gate again and came back to the cab.

"Are things so very bad?"

"They are," replied the cabman. "It's done with—is this job. We're not wanted now." And, taking up his whip, he prepared to drive away.

"How long have they been as bad as this?"

The cabman dropped his hand again, as though glad to rest it, and answered incoherently:

"Thirty-five year I've been drivin' a cab."

And, sunk again in contemplation of his horse's tail, he could only be roused by many questions to express himself, having, as it seemed, no knowledge of the habit.

"I don't blame the taxis, I don't blame nobody. It's come on us, that's what it has. I left the wife this morning with nothing in the house. She was saying to me only yesterday: 'What have you brought home the last four months?' 'Put it at six shillings a week.' I said. 'No,' she said, 'seven.' Well, that's right—she enters it all down in her book."

"You are really going short of food?"

The cabman smiled; and that smile between those two deep hollows was surely as strange as ever shone on a human face.

"You may say that," he said. "Well, what does it amount to? Before I picked you up, I had one eighteenpenny fare to-day; and yesterday I took five shillings. And I've got seven bob a day to pay for the cab, and that's low, too. There's many and many a proprietor that's broke and gone—every bit as bad as us. They let us down as easy as ever they can; you can't get blood from a stone, can you?" Once again he smiled. "I'm sorry for them, too, and I'm sorry

for the horses, though they come out best of the three of us, I do believe."

One of us muttered something about the Public.

The cabman turned his face and stared down through the darkness.

"The Public?" he said, and his voice had in it a faint surprise. "Well, they all want the taxis. It's natural. They get about faster in them, and time's money. I was seven hours before I picked you up. And then you was lookin' for a taxi. Them as take us because they can't get better, they're not in a good temper, as a rule. And there's a few old ladies that's frightened of the motors, but old ladies aren't never very free with their money—can't afford to be, the most of them, I expect."

"Everybody's sorry for you; one would have thought that——"

He interrupted quietly: "Sorrow don't buy bread. . . . I never had nobody ask me about things before." And, slowly moving his long face from side to side, he added: "Besides, what could people do? They can't be expected to support you; and if they started askin' you questions they'd feel it very awkward. They know that, I suspect. Of course, there's such a lot of us; the

hansoms are pretty nigh as bad off as we are. Well, we're gettin' fewer every day, that's one thing."

Not knowing whether or no to manifest sympathy with this extinction, we approached the horse. It was a horse that "stood over" a good deal at the knee, and in the darkness seemed to have innumerable ribs. And suddenly one of us said: "Many people want to see nothing but taxis on the streets, if only for the sake of the horses."

The cabman nodded.

"This old fellow," he said, "never carried a deal of flesh. His grub don't put spirit into him nowadays; it's not up to much in quality, but he gets enough of it."

"And you don't?"

The cabman again took up his whip.

"I don't suppose," he said without emotion, "any one could ever find another job for me now. I've been at this too long. It'll be the workhouse, if it's not the other thing."

And hearing us mutter that it seemed cruel, he smiled for the third time.

"Yes," he said slowly, "it's a bit 'ard on us, because we've done nothing to deserve it. But things are like that, so far as I can see. One thing comes pushin' out another, and so you go

on. I've thought about it—you get to thinkin' and worryin' about the rights o' things, sittin' up here all day. No, I don't see anything for it. It'll soon be the end of us now—can't last much longer. And I don't know that I'll be sorry to have done with it. It's pretty well broke my spirit."

"There was a fund got up."

"Yes, it helped a few of us to learn the motor-drivin'; but what's the good of that to me, at my time of life? Sixty, that's my age; I'm not the only one—there's hundreds like me. We're not fit for it, that's the fact; we haven't got the nerve now. It'd want a mint of money to help *us*. And what you say's the truth—people want to see the end of us. They want the taxis—our day's over. I'm not complaining; you asked me about it yourself."

And for the third time he raised his whip.

"Tell me what you would have done if you had been given your fare and just sixpence over?"

The cabman stared downward, as though puzzled by that question.

"Done? Why, nothing. What could I have done?"

"But you said that it had saved your life."

"Yes, I said that," he answered slowly; "I was

feelin' a bit low. You can't help it sometimes; it's the thing comin' on you, and no way out of it —that's what gets over you. We try not to think about it, as a rule."

And this time, with a "Thank you, kindly!" he touched his horse's flank with the whip. Like a thing aroused from sleep the forgotten creature started and began to draw the cabman away from us. Very slowly they travelled down the road among the shadows of the trees broken by lamplight. Above us, white ships of cloud were sailing rapidly across the dark river of sky on the wind which smelled of change. And, after the cab was lost to sight, that wind still brought to us the dying sound of the slow wheels.

1910.

RIDING IN MIST

WET and hot, having her winter coat, the mare exactly matched the drenched fox-coloured beech-leaf drifts. As was her wont on such misty days, she danced along with head held high, her neck a little arched, her ears pricked, pretending that things were not what they seemed, and now and then vigorously trying to leave me planted on the air. Stones which had rolled out of the lane banks were her especial goblins, for one such had maltreated her nerves before she came into this ball-room world, and she had not forgotten.

There was no wind that day. On the beech-trees were still just enough of coppery leaves to look like fires lighted high-up to air the eeriness; but most of the twigs, pearled with water, were patterned very naked against universal grey. Berries were few, except the pink spindle one, so far the most beautiful, of which there were more than Earth generally vouchsafes. There was no sound in the deep lanes, none of that sweet, overhead sighing of yesterday at the same hour, but there was a quality of silence—a dumb mist mur-

muration. We passed a tree with a proud pigeon sitting on its top spire, quite too heavy for the twig delicacy below; undisturbed by the mare's hoofs or the creaking of saddle leather, he let us pass, absorbed in his world of tranquil turtle-doves. The mist had thickened to a white, infinitesimal rain-dust, and in it the trees began to look strange, as though they had lost one another. The world seemed inhabited only by quick, soundless wraiths as one trotted past.

Close to a farm-house the mare stood still with that extreme suddenness peculiar to her at times, and four black pigs scuttled by and at once became white air. By now we were both hot and inclined to cling closely together and take liberties with each other; I telling her about her nature, name, and appearance, together with comments on her manners; and she giving forth that sterterous, sweet snuffle, which begins under the star on her forehead. On such days she did not sneeze, reserving those expressions of her joy for sunny days and the crisp winds. At a forking of the ways we came suddenly on one grey and three brown ponies, who shied round and flung away in front of us, a vision of pretty heads and haunches tangled in the thin lane, till, conscious that they were beyond their beat, they faced the bank and,

one by one, scrambled over to join the other ghosts out on the dim common.

Dipping down now over the road, we passed hounds going home. Pied, dumb-footed shapes, padding along in that soft-eyed, remote world of theirs, with a tall riding splash of red in front, and a tall splash of riding red behind. Then through a gate we came on to the moor, amongst whitened furze. The mist thickened. A curlew was whistling on its invisible way, far up; and that wistful, wild calling seemed the very voice of the day. Keeping in view the glint of the road, we galloped; rejoicing, both of us, to be free of the jog-jog of the lanes.

And first the voice of the curlew died; then the glint of the road vanished; and we were quite alone. Even the furze was gone; no shape of anything left, only the black, peaty ground, and the thickening mist. We might as well have been that lonely bird crossing up there in the blind white nothingness, like a human spirit wandering on the undiscovered moor of its own future.

The mare jumped a pile of stones, which appeared, as it were, after we had passed over; and it came into my mind that, if we happened to strike one of the old quarry pits, we should infallibly be killed. Somehow, there was pleasure

in this thought, that we might, or might not, strike that old quarry pit. The blood in us being hot, we had pure joy in charging its white, impalpable solidity, which made way, and at once closed in behind us. There was great fun in this yard-by-yard discovery that we were not yet dead, this flying, shelterless challenge to whatever might lie out there, five yards in front. We felt supremely above the wish to know that our necks were safe; we were happy, panting in the vapour that beat against our faces from the sheer speed of our galloping. Suddenly the ground grew lumpy and made up-hill. The mare slackened pace; we stopped. Before us, behind, to right and left, white vapour. No sky, no distance, barely the earth. No wind in our faces, no wind anywhere. At first we just got our breath, thought nothing, talked a little. Then came a chillness, a faint clutching over the heart. The mare snuffled; we turned and made down-hill. And still the mist thickened, and seemed to darken ever so little; we went slowly, suddenly doubtful of all that was in front. There came into our minds visions, so distant in that darkening vapour, of a warm stall and manger of oats; of tea and a log fire. The mist seemed to have fingers now, long, dark-white, crawling fingers; it seemed, too, to have in

its sheer silence a sort of muttered menace, a shuddery lurkingness, as if from out of it that spirit of the unknown, which in hot blood we had just now so gleefully mocked, were creeping up at us, intent on its vengeance. Since the ground no longer sloped, we could not go down-hill; there were no means left of telling in what direction we were moving, and we stopped to listen. There was no sound, not one tiny noise of water, wind in trees, or man; not even of birds or the moor ponies. And the mist darkened. The mare reached her head down and walked on, smelling at the heather; every time she sniffed, one's heart quivered, hoping she had found the way. She threw up her head, snorted, and stood still; and there passed just in front of us a pony and her foal, shapes of scampering dusk, whisked like blurred shadows across a sheet. Hoof-silent in the long heather—as ever were visiting ghosts—they were gone in a flash. The mare plunged forward, following. But, in the feel of her gallop, and the feel of my heart, there was no more that ecstasy of facing the unknown; there was only the cold, hasty dread of loneliness. Far asunder as the poles were those two sensations, evoked by this same motion. The mare swerved violently and stopped. There, passing within three

yards, *from the same direction as before*, the soundless shapes of the pony and her foal flew by again, more intangible, less dusky now against the darker screen. Were we, then, to be haunted by those bewildering uncanny ones, flitting past ever from the same direction? This time the mare did not follow, but stood still; knowing as well as I that direction was quite lost. Soon, with a whimper, she picked her way on again, smelling at the heather. And the mist darkened!

Then, out of the heart of that dusky whiteness, came a tiny sound; we stood, not breathing, turning our heads. I could see the mare's eye fixed and straining at the vapour. The tiny sound grew till it became the muttering of wheels. The mare dashed forward. The muttering ceased untimely; but she did not stop; turning abruptly to the left, she slid, scrambled, and dropped into a trot. The mist seemed whiter below us; we were on the road. And involuntarily there came from me a sound, not quite a shout, not quite an oath. I saw the mare's eye turn back, faintly derisive, as who should say: Alone I did it! Then slowly, comfortably, a little ashamed, we jogged on, in the mood of men and horses when danger is over. So pleasant it seemed now, in one short half-hour, to have passed through the circle-swing

of the emotions, from the ecstasy of hot recklessness to the clutching of chill fear. But the meeting-point of those two sensations we had left out there on the mysterious moor! Why, at one moment, had we thought it finer than anything on earth to risk the breaking of our necks; and the next, shuddered at being lost in the darkening mist with winter night fast coming on?

And very luxuriously we turned once more into the lanes, enjoying the past, scenting the future. Close to home, the first little eddy of wind stirred, and the song of dripping twigs began; an owl hooted, honey-soft, in the fog. We came on two farm hands mending the lane at the turn of the avenue, and, curled on the top of the bank, their cosy red collie pup, waiting for them to finish work for the day. He raised his sharp nose and looked at us dewily. We turned down, padding softly in the wet fox-red drifts under the beech-trees, whereon the last leaves still flickered out in the darkening whiteness, that now seemed so little eerie. We passed the grey-green skeleton of the farm-yard gate. A hen ran across us, clucking, into the dusk. The mare drew her long, home-coming snuffle, and stood still.

1910.

THE PROCESSION

IN one of those corners of our land canopied by the fumes of blind industry, there was, on that day, a lull in darkness. A fresh wind had split the customary heaven, or roof of hell; was sweeping long drifts of creamy clouds across a blue still pallid with reek. The sun even shone—a sun whose face seemed white and wondering. And under that rare sun all the little town, among its slag heaps and few tall chimneys, had an air of living faster. In those continuous courts and alleys, where the women worked, smoke from each little forge rose and dispersed into the wind with strange alacrity; amongst the women, too, there was that same eagerness, for the sunshine had crept in and was making pale all those dark-raftered, sooted ceilings which covered them in, together with their immortal comrades, the small open furnaces. About their work they had been busy since seven o'clock; their feet pressing the leather lungs which fanned the conical heaps of glowing fuel, their hands poking into the glow a thin iron rod till the end could be curved into a fiery hook; snapping it with a mallet; threading it with tongs

on to the chain; hammering, closing the link; and, without a second's pause, thrusting the iron rod again into the glow. And while they worked they chattered, laughed sometimes, now and then sighed. They seemed of all ages and all types; from her who looked like a peasant of Provence, broad, brown, and strong, to the weariest white consumptive wisp; from old women of seventy, with straggling grey hair, to fifteen-year-old girls. In the cottage forges there would be but one worker, or two at most; in the shop forges four, or even five, little glowing heaps; four or five of the grimy, pale lung-bellows; and never a moment without a fiery hook about to take its place on the growing chains, never a second when the thin smoke of the forges, and of those lives consuming slowly in front of them, did not escape from out of the dingy, whitewashed spaces past the dark rafters, away to freedom.

But there had been in the air that morning something more than the white sunlight. There had been anticipation. And at two o'clock began fulfilment. The forges were stilled, and from court and alley forth came the women. In their ragged working clothes, in their best clothes—so little different; in bonnets, in hats, bareheaded; with babies born and unborn, they swarmed into

the high street and formed across it behind the band. A strange, magpie, jay-like flock; black, white, patched with brown and green and blue, shifting, chattering, laughing, seeming unconscious of any purpose. A thousand and more of them, with faces twisted and scored by those myriad deformings which a desperate town-toiling and little food fasten on human visages; yet with hardly a single evil or brutal face. Seemingly it was not easy to be evil or brutal on a wage that scarcely bound soul and body. A thousand and more of the poorest-paid and hardest-worked human beings in the world.

On the pavement alongside this strange, acquiescing assembly of revolt, about to march in protest against the conditions of their lives, stood a young woman without a hat and in poor clothes, but with a sort of beauty in her rough-haired, high-cheek-boned, dark-eyed face. She was not one of them; yet, by a stroke of Nature's irony, there was graven on her face alone of all those faces, the true look of rebellion; a haughty, almost fierce, uneasy look—an untamed look. On all the other thousand faces one could see no bitterness, no fierceness, not even enthusiasm; only a half-stolid, half-vivacious patience and eagerness as of children going to a party.

The band played; and they began to march. Laughing, talking, waving flags, trying to keep step; with the same expression slowly but surely coming over every face; the future was not; only the present—this happy present of marching behind the discordance of a brass band; this strange present of crowded movement and laughter in open air.

We others—some dozen accidentals like myself, and the tall, grey-haired lady interested in "the people," together with those few kind spirits in charge of "the show"—marched too, a little self-conscious, desiring with a vague military sensation to hold our heads up, but not too much, under the eyes of the curious bystanders. These—nearly all men—were well-wishers, it was said, though their faces, pale from their own work in shop or furnace, expressed nothing but apathy. They wished well, very dumbly, in the presence of this new thing, as if they found it queer that women should be doing something for themselves; queer and rather dangerous. A few, indeed, shuffled along between the column and the little hopeless shops and grimy factory sheds, and one or two accompanied their women, carrying the baby. Now and then there passed us some better-to-do citizen—a housewife, or lawyer's clerk, or iron-

monger, with lips pressed rather tightly together and an air of taking no notice of this disturbance of traffic, as though the whole thing were a rather poor joke which they had already heard too often.

So, with laughter and a continual crack of voices our jay-like crew swung on, swaying and thumping in the strange ecstasy of irreflection, happy to be moving they knew not where, nor greatly why, under the visiting sun, to the sound of murdered music. Whenever the band stopped playing, discipline became as tatterdemalion as the very flags and garments; but never once did they lose that look of essential order, as if indeed they knew that, being the worst-served creatures in the Christian world, they were the chief guardians of the inherent dignity of man.

Hatless, in the very front row, marched a tall slip of a girl, arrow-straight, and so thin, with dirty fair hair, in a blouse and skirt gaping behind, ever turning her pretty face on its pretty slim neck from side to side, so that one could see her blue eyes sweeping here, there, everywhere, with a sort of flower-like wildness, as if a secret embracing of each moment forbade her to let them rest on anything and break this pleasure of just marching. It seemed that in the never-still eyes

of that anæmic, happy girl the spirit of our march had elected to enshrine itself and to make thence its little excursions to each ecstatic follower. Just behind her marched a little old woman—a maker of chains, they said, for forty years—whose black slits of eyes were sparkling, who fluttered a bit of ribbon, and reeled with her sense of the exquisite humour of the world. Every now and then she would make a rush at one of her leaders to demonstrate how immoderately glorious was life. And each time she spoke the woman next to her, laden with a heavy baby, went off into squeals of laughter. Behind her, again, marched one who beat time with her head and waved a little bit of stick, intoxicated by this noble music.

For an hour the pageant wound through the dejected street, pursuing neither method nor set route, till it came to a deserted slag-heap, selected for the speech-making. Slowly the motley regiment swung into that grim amphitheatre under the pale sunshine; and, as I watched, a strange fancy visited my brain. I seemed to see over every ragged head of those marching women a little yellow flame, a thin, flickering gleam, spiring upward and blown back by the wind. A trick of the sunlight, maybe? Or was it that the life in their hearts, the inextinguishable breath of

happiness, had for a moment escaped prison, and was fluttering at the pleasure of the breeze?

Silent now, just enjoying the sound of the words thrown down to them, they stood, unimaginably patient, with that happiness of they knew not what gilding the air above them between the patchwork ribands of their poor flags. If they could not tell very much why they had come, nor believe very much that they would gain anything by coming; if their demonstration did not mean to the world quite all that oratory would have them think; if they themselves were but the poorest, humblest, least learned women in the land—for all that, it seemed to me that in those tattered, wistful figures, so still, so trustful, I was looking on such beauty as I had never beheld. All the elaborated glory of things made, the perfected dreams of æsthetes, the embroideries of romance, seemed as nothing beside this sudden vision of the wild goodness native in humble hearts.

1910.

A CHRISTIAN

ONE day that summer, I came away from a luncheon in company of an old College chum. Always exciting to meet those one hasn't seen for years; and as we walked across the Park together I kept looking at him askance. He had altered a good deal. Lean he always was, but now very lean, and so upright that his parson's coat was overhung by the back of his long and narrow head, with its dark grizzled hair, which thought had not yet loosened on his forehead. His clean-shorn face, so thin and oblong, was remarkable only for the eyes: dark-browed and lashed, and coloured like bright steel, they had a fixity in them, a sort of absence, on one couldn't tell what business. They made me think of torture. And his mouth always gently smiling, as if its pinched curly sweetness had been commanded, was the mouth of a man crucified—yes, crucified!

Tramping silently over the parched grass, I felt that if we talked, we must infallibly disagree; his straight-up, narrow forehead so suggested a nature divided within itself into compartments of iron.

It was hot that day, and we rested presently beside the Serpentine. On its bright waters were the usual young men, sculling themselves to and fro with their usual sad energy, the usual promenaders loitering and watching them, the usual dog that swam when it did not bark, and barked when it did not swim; and my friend sat smiling, twisting between his thin fingers the little gold cross on his silk vest.

Then all of a sudden we did begin to talk; and not of those matters of which the well-bred naturally converse—the habits of the rarer kinds of ducks, and the careers of our College friends, but of something never mentioned in polite society.

At lunch our hostess had told me the sad story of an unhappy marriage, and I had itched spiritually to find out what my friend, who seemed so far away from me, felt about such things. And now I determined to find out.

"Tell me," I asked him, "which do you consider most important—the letter or the spirit of Christ's teachings?"

"My dear fellow," he answered gently, "what a question! How can you separate them?"

"Well, is it not the essence of His doctrine that the spirit is all important, and the forms of little

value? Does not that run through all the Sermon on the Mount?"

"Certainly."

"If, then," I said, "Christ's teaching is concerned with the spirit, do you consider that Christians are justified in holding others bound by formal rules of conduct, without reference to what is passing in their spirits?"

"If it is for their good."

"What enables you to decide what is for their good?"

"Surely, we are told."

"Not to judge, that ye be not judged."

"Oh! but we do not, ourselves, judge; we are but impersonal ministers of the rules of God."

"Ah! Do general rules of conduct take account of the variations of the individual spirit?"

He looked at me hard, as if he began to scent heresy.

"You had better explain yourself more fully," he said. "I really don't follow."

"Well, let us take a concrete instance. We know Christ's saying of the married that they are one flesh! But we know also that there are wives who continue to live the married life with dreadful feelings of spiritual revolt—wives who have found out that, in spite of all their efforts, they

have no spiritual affinity with their husbands. Is that in accordance with the spirit of Christ's teaching, or is it not?"

"We are told—" he began.

"I have admitted the definite commandment: 'They twain shall be one flesh.' There could not be, seemingly, any more rigid law laid down; how do you reconcile it with the essence of Christ's teaching? Frankly, I want to know: Is there or is there not a spiritual coherence in Christianity, or is it only a gathering of laws and precepts, with no inherent connected spiritual philosophy?"

"Of course," he said, in his long-suffering voice, "we don't look at things like that—for us there is no questioning."

"But how *do* you reconcile such marriages as I speak of, with the spirit of Christ's teaching? I think you ought to answer me."

"Oh! I can, perfectly," he answered; "the reconciliation is through suffering. What a poor woman in such a case must suffer makes for the salvation of her spirit. That is the spiritual fulfilment, and in such a case the justification of the law."

"So then," I said, "sacrifice or suffering is the coherent thread of Christian philosophy?"

"Suffering cheerfully borne," he answered.

"You do not think," I said, "that there is a touch of extravagance in that? Would you say, for example, that an unhappy marriage is a more Christian thing than a happy one, where there is no suffering, but only love?"

A line came between his brows. "Well!" he said at last, "I would say, I think, that a woman who crucifies her flesh with a cheerful spirit in obedience to God's law, stands higher in the eyes of God than one who undergoes no such sacrifice in her married life." And I had the feeling that his stare was passing through me, on its way to an unseen goal.

"You would desire, then, I suppose, suffering as the greatest blessing for yourself?"

"Humbly," he said, "I would try to."

"And naturally, for others?"

"God forbid!"

"But surely that is inconsistent."

He murmured: "You see, *I have suffered.*"

We were silent. At last I said: "Yes, that makes much which was dark quite clear to me."

"Oh?" he asked.

I answered slowly: "Not many men, you know, even in your profession, have really suffered. That is why they do not feel the difficulty which *you* feel in desiring suffering for others."

He threw up his head exactly as if I had hit him on the jaw: "It's weakness in me, I know," he said.

"I should have rather called it weakness in them. But suppose you are right, and that it's weakness not to be able to desire promiscuous suffering for others, would you go further and say that it is Christian for those, who have not experienced a certain kind of suffering, to force that particular kind on others?"

He sat silent for a full minute, trying evidently to reach to the bottom of my thought.

"Surely not," he said at last, "except as ministers of God's laws."

"You do not then think that it is Christian for the husband of such a woman to keep her in that state of suffering—not being, of course, a minister of God?"

He began stammering at that: "I—I—" he said. "No; that is, I think not—not Christian. No, certainly."

"Then, such a marriage, if persisted in, makes of the wife indeed a Christian, but of the husband—the reverse."

"The answer to that is clear," he said quietly: "The husband must abstain."

"Yes, that is, perhaps, coherently Christian,

on your theory: They would then both suffer. But the marriage, of course, has become no marriage. They are no longer one flesh."

He looked at me, almost impatiently, as if to say: Do not compel me to enforce silence on you!

"But, suppose," I went on, "and this, you know, is the more frequent case, the man refuses to abstain. Would you then say it was more Christian to allow him to become daily less Christian through his unchristian conduct, than to relieve the woman of her suffering at the expense of the spiritual benefit she thence derives? Why, in fact, do you favour one case more than the other?"

"All question of relief," he replied, "is a matter for Cæsar; it cannot concern me."

There had come into his face a rigidity—as if I might hit it with my questions till my tongue was tired, and it be no more moved than the bench on which we were sitting.

"One more question," I said, "and I have done. Since the Christian teaching is concerned with the spirit and not forms, and the thread in it which binds all together and makes it coherent, is that of suffering——"

"Redemption by suffering," he put in.

"If you will—in one word, self-crucifixion—I

must ask you, and don't take it personally, because of what you told me of yourself: In life generally, one does not accept from people any teaching that is not the result of first-hand experience on their parts. Do you believe that this Christian teaching of yours is valid from the mouths of those who have not themselves suffered--who have not themselves, as it were, been crucified?"

He did not answer for a minute; then he said, with painful slowness: "Christ laid hands on his apostles and sent them forth; and they in turn, and so on, to our day."

"Do you say, then, that this guarantees that they have themselves suffered, so that in spirit they are identified with their teaching?"

He answered bravely: "No—I do not—I cannot say that in fact it is always so."

"Is not then their teaching born of forms, and not of the spirit?"

He rose; and with a sort of deep sorrow at my stubbornness said: "We are not permitted to know the way of this; it is so ordained; we must have faith."

As he stood there, turned from me, with his hat off, and his neck painfully flushed under the sharp outcurve of his dark head, a feeling of pity surged up in me, as if I had taken an unfair advantage.

"Reason—coherence—philosophy," he said suddenly. "You don't understand. All that is nothing to me—nothing—nothing!"

1911.

WIND IN THE ROCKS

THOUGH dew-dark when we set forth, there was stealing into the frozen air an invisible white host of the wan-winged light—born beyond the mountains, and already, like a drift of doves, harbouring grey-white high up on the snowy sky-caves of Monte Cristallo; and within us, tramping over the valley meadows, was the incredible elation of those who set out before the sun has risen; every minute of the precious day before us—we had not lost one!

At the mouth of that enchanted chine, across which for a million years the howdahed rock elephant has marched, but never yet passed from sight, we crossed the stream, and among the trees began our ascent. Very far away the first cow-bells chimed; and, over the dark heights, we saw the thin, sinking moon, looking like the white horns of some devotional beast watching and waiting up there for the god of light. That god came slowly, stalking across far over our heads from top to top; then, of a sudden, his flame-white form was seen standing in a gap of the valley walls; the

trees flung themselves along the ground before him, and censers of pine gum began swinging in the dark aisles, releasing their perfumed steam. Throughout these happy ravines where no man lives, he shows himself naked and unashamed, the colour of pale honey; on his golden hair such shining as one has not elsewhere seen; his eyes like old wine on fire. And already he had swept his hand across the invisible strings, for there had arisen the music of uncurling leaves and flitting things.

A legend runs, that, driven from land to land by Christians, Apollo hid himself in Lower Austria, but those who aver they saw him there in the thirteenth century were wrong; it was to these enchanted chines, frequented only by the mountain shepherds, that he certainly came.

And as we were lying on the grass of the first alp, with the star gentians—those fallen drops of the sky—and the burnt-brown dandelions, and scattered shrubs of alpen-rose round us, we were visited by one of these very shepherds, passing with his flock—the fiercest-looking man who ever spoke in a gentle voice; six feet high, with an orange cloak, bare knees, burnt as the very dandelions, a beard blacker than black, and eyes more glorious than if sun and night had dived and were lying imprisoned in their depths. He spoke in

an unknown tongue, and could certainly not understand any word of ours; but he smelled of the good earth, and only through interminable watches under sun and stars could so great a gentleman have been perfected.

Presently, while we rested outside that Alpine hut which faces the three sphinx-like mountains, there came back, from climbing the smallest and most dangerous of those peaks, one, pale from heat, and trembling with fatigue; a tall man, with long brown hands, and a long, thin, bearded face. And, as he sipped cautiously of red wine and water, he looked at his little conquered mountain. His kindly, screwed-up eyes, his kindly, bearded lips, even his limbs seemed smiling; and not for the world would we have jarred with words that rapt, smiling man, enjoying the sacred hour of him who has just proved himself. In silence we watched, in silence left him smiling, knowing somehow that we should remember him all our days. For there was in his smile the glamour of adventure just for the sake of danger; all that high instinct which takes a man out of his chair to brave what he need not.

Between that hut and the three mountains lies a saddle—astride of all beauty and all colour, master of a titanic chaos of deep clefts, tawny

heights, red domes, far snow, and the purple of long shadows; and, standing there, we comprehended a little of what Earth had been through in her time, to have made this playground for most glorious demons. Mother Earth! What travail undergone, what long heroic throes, had brought on her face such majesty!

Hereabout edelweiss was clinging to the smoothed-out rubble; but a little higher, even the everlasting plant was lost, there was no more life. And presently we lay down on the mountain side, rather far apart. Up here above trees and pasture the wind had a strange, bare voice, free from all outer influence, sweeping along with a cold, whiffling sound. On the warm stones, in full sunlight, uplifted over all the beauty of Italy, one felt at first only delight in space and wild loveliness, in the unknown valleys, and the strength of the sun. It was so good to be alive; so ineffably good to be living in this most wonderful world, drinking air nectar.

Behind us, from the three mountains, came the frequent thud and scuffle of falling rocks, loosened by rains. The wind, mist, and winter snow had ground the powdery stones on which we lay to a pleasant bed, but once on a time they, too, had clung up there. And very slowly, one could not

say how or when, the sense of joy began changing to a sense of fear. The awful impersonality of those great rock-creatures, the terrible impartiality of that cold, clinging wind which swept by, never an inch lifted above ground! Not one tiny soul, the size of a midge or rock flower, lived here. Not one little "I" breathed here, and loved!

And we, too, some day would no longer love, having become part of this monstrous, lovely earth, of that cold, whiffling air. To be no longer able to love! It seemed incredible, too grim to bear; yet it was true! To become powder, and the wind; no more to feel the sunlight; to be loved no more! To become a whiffling noise, cold, without one's self! To drift on the breath of that noise, homeless! Up here, there were not even those little velvet, grey-white flower-comrades we had plucked. No life! Nothing but the creeping wind, and those great rocky heights, whence came the sound of falling—symbols of that cold, untimely state into which we, too, must pass. Never more to love, nor to be loved! One could but turn to the earth, and press one's face to it, away from the wild loveliness. Of what use loveliness that must be lost; of what use loveliness when one could not love? The earth was warm and firm

beneath the palms of the hands; but there still came the sound of the impartial wind, and the careless roar of the stones falling.

Below, in those valleys amongst the living trees and grass, was the comradeship of unnumbered life, so that to pass out into Peace, to step beyond, to die, seemed but a brotherly act, amongst all those others; but up here, where no creature breathed, we saw the heart of the desert that stretches before each little human soul. Up here, it froze the spirit; even Peace seemed mocking—hard as a stone. Yet, to try and hide, to tuck one's head under one's own wing, was not possible in this air so crystal clear, so far above incense and the narcotics of set creeds, and the fevered breath of prayers and protestations. Even to know that between organic and inorganic matter there is no gulf fixed, was of no peculiar comfort. The jealous wind came creeping over the lifeless limestone, removing even the poor solace of its warmth; one turned from it, desperate, to look up at the sky, the blue, burning, wide, ineffable, far sky.

Then slowly, without reason, that icy fear passed into a feeling, not of joy, not of peace, but as if Life and Death were exalted into what was neither life nor death, a strange and motionless vibration, in which one had been merged, and

rested, utterly content, equipoised, divested of desire, endowed with life and death.

But since this moment had come before its time, we got up, and, close together, marched on rather silently, in the hot sun.

1910.

MY DISTANT RELATIVE

THOUGH I had not seen my distant relative for years—not, in fact, since he was obliged to give Vancouver Island up as a bad job—I knew him at once, when, with head a little on one side, and tea-cup held high, as if to confer a blessing, he said: "Hallo!" across the Club smoking-room.

Thin as a lath—not one ounce heavier—tall, and very upright, with his pale forehead, and pale eyes, and pale beard, he had the air of a ghost of a man. He had always had that air. And his voice—that matter-of-fact and slightly nasal voice, with its thin, pragmatical tone—was like a wraith of optimism, issuing between pale lips. I noticed, too, that his town habiliments still had their unspeakable pale neatness, as if, poor things, they were trying to stare the daylight out of countenance.

He brought his tea across to my bay window, with that wistful sociability of his, as of a man who cannot always find a listener.

"But what are you doing in town?" I said. "I thought you were in Yorkshire with your aunt."

Over his round, light eyes, fixed on something

in the street, the lids fell quickly twice, as the film falls over the eyes of a parrot.

"I'm after a job," he answered. "Must be on the spot just now."

And it seemed to me that I had heard those words from him before.

"Ah, yes," I said, "and do you think you'll get it?"

But even as I spoke I felt sorry, remembering how many jobs he had been after in his time, and how soon they ended when he had got them. He answered:

"Oh, yes! They ought to give it me," then added rather suddenly: "You never know, though. People are so funny!"

And crossing his thin legs, he went on to tell me, with quaint impersonality, a number of instances of how people had been funny in connection with jobs he had not been given.

"You see," he ended, "the country's in such a state—capital going out of it every day. Enterprise being killed all over the place. There's practically nothing to be had!"

"Ah!" I said, "you think it's worse, then, than it used to be?"

He smiled; in that smile there was a shade of patronage.

"We're going down-hill as fast as ever we can. National character's losing all its backbone. No wonder, with all this molly-coddling going on!"

"Oh!" I murmured, "molly-coddling? Isn't that excessive?"

"Well! Look at the way everything's being done for them! The working classes are losing their self-respect as fast as ever they can. Their independence is gone already!"

"You think?"

"Sure of it! I'll give you an instance—" and he went on to describe to me the degeneracy of certain working men employed by his aunt and his eldest brother Claud and his youngest brother Alan.

"They don't do a stroke more than they're obliged," he ended; "they know jolly well they've got their Unions, and their pensions, and this Insurance, to fall back on."

It was evidently a subject on which he felt strongly.

"Yes," he muttered, "the nation is being rotted down."

And a faint thrill of surprise passed through me. For the affairs of the nation moved him so much more strongly than his own. His voice already had a different ring, his eyes a different look. He eagerly leaned forward, and his long,

straight backbone looked longer and straighter than ever. He was less the ghost of a man. A faint flush even had come into his pale cheeks, and he moved his well-kept hands emphatically.

"Oh, yes!" he said: "The country is going to the dogs, right enough; but you can't get them to see it. They go on sapping and sapping the independence of the people. If the working man's to be looked after, whatever he does—what on earth's to become of his go, and foresight, and perseverance?"

In his rising voice a certain piquancy was left to its accent of the ruling class by that faint twang, which came, I remembered, from some slight defect in his tonsils.

"Mark my words! So long as we're on these lines, we shall do nothing. It's going against evolution. They say Darwin's getting old-fashioned; all I know is, he's good enough for me. Competition is the only thing."

"But competition," I said, "is bitter cruel, and some people can't stand against it!" And I looked at him rather hard: "Do you object to putting any sort of floor under the feet of people like that?"

He let his voice drop a little, as if in deference to my scruples.

"Ah!" he said; "but if you once begin this sort of thing, there's no end to it. It's so insidious. The more they have, the more they want; and all the time they're losing fighting power. I've thought pretty deeply about this. It's short-sighted; it really doesn't do!"

"But," I said, "surely you're not against saving people from being knocked out of time by old age, and accidents like illness, and the fluctuations of trade?"

"Oh!" he said, "I'm not a bit against charity. Aunt Emma's splendid about that. And Claud's awfully good. I do what I can, myself." He looked at me, so queerly deprecating, that I quite liked him at that moment. At heart—I felt—he was a good fellow. "All I think is," he went on, "that to give them something that they can rely on as a matter of course, apart from their own exertions, is the wrong principle altogether," and suddenly his voice began to rise again, and his eyes to stare. "I'm convinced that all this doing things for other people, and bolstering up the weak, is rotten. It stands to reason that it must be."

He had risen to his feet, so preoccupied with the wrongness of that principle that he seemed to have forgotten my presence. And as he stood there in the window the light was too strong for

him. All the thin incapacity of that shadowy figure was pitilessly displayed; the desperate narrowness in that long, pale face; the wambling look of those pale, well-kept hands—all that made him such a ghost of a man. But his nasal, dogmatic voice rose and rose.

"There's nothing for it but bracing up! We must cut away all this State support; we must teach them to rely on themselves. It's all sheer pauperisation."

And suddenly there shot through me the fear that he might burst one of those little blue veins in his pale forehead, so vehement had he become; and hastily I changed the subject.

"Do you like living up there with your aunt?" I asked: "Isn't it a bit quiet?"

He turned, as if I had awakened him from a dream.

"Oh, well!" he said, "it's only till I get this job."

"Let me see—how long is it since you——?"

"Four years. She's very glad to have me, of course."

"And how's your brother Claud?"

"Oh! All right, thanks; a bit worried with the estate. The poor old gov'nor left it in rather a mess, you know."

"Ah! Yes. Does he do other work?"

"Oh! Always busy in the parish."

"And your brother Richard?"

"He's all right. Came home this year. Got just enough to live on, with his pension—hasn't saved a rap, of course."

"And Willie? Is he still delicate?"

"Yes."

"I'm sorry."

"Easy job, his, you know. And even if his health does give out, his college pals will always find him some sort of sinecure. So jolly popular, old Willie!"

"And Alan? I haven't heard anything of him since his Peruvian thing came to grief. He married, didn't he?"

"Rather! One of the Burleys. Nice girl—heiress; lot of property in Hampshire. He looks after it for her now."

"Doesn't do anything else, I suppose?"

"Keeps up his antiquarianism."

I had exhausted the members of his family.

Then, as though by eliciting the good fortunes of his brothers I had cast some slur upon himself, he said suddenly: "If the railway had come, as it ought to have, while I was out there, I should have done quite well with my fruit farm."

"Of course," I agreed; "it was bad luck. But after all, you're sure to get a job soon, and—so long as you can live up there with your aunt—you can afford to wait, and not bother."

"Yes," he murmured. And I got up.

"Well, it's been very jolly to hear about you all!"

He followed me out.

"Awfully glad, old man," he said, "to have seen you, and had this talk. I was feeling rather low. Waiting to know whether I get that job —it's not lively."

He came down the Club steps with me. By the door of my cab a loafer was standing; a tall tatterdemalion with a pale, bearded face. My distant relative fended him away, and leaning through the window, murmured: "Awful lot of these chaps about now!"

For the life of me I could not help looking at him very straight. But no flicker of apprehension crossed his face.

"Well, good-by again!" he said: "You've cheered me up a lot!"

I glanced back from my moving cab. Some monetary transaction was passing between him and the loafer, but, short-sighted as I am, I found it difficult to decide which of those tall, pale,

bearded figures was giving the other one a penny. And by some strange freak an awful vision shot up before me—of myself, and my distant relative, and Claud, and Richard, and Willie, and Alan, all suddenly relying on ourselves. I took out my handkerchief to mop my brow; but a thought struck me, and I put it back. Was it possible for me, and my distant relatives, and their distant relatives, and so on to infinity of those who belonged to a class provided by birth with a certain position, raised by Providence on to a platform made up of money inherited, of interest, of education fitting us for certain privileged pursuits, of friends similarly endowed, of substantial homes, and substantial relatives of some sort or other, on whom we could fall back—was it possible for any of us ever to be in the position of having to rely absolutely on ourselves? For several minutes I pondered that question; and slowly I came to the conclusion that, short of crime, or that unlikely event, marooning, it was not possible. Never, never—try as we might—could any single one of us be quite in the position of one of those whose approaching pauperisation my distant relative had so vehemently deplored. We were already pauperised. If we served our country, we were pensioned. If we inherited land, it could not

be taken from us. If we went into the Church, we were there for life, whether we were suitable or no. If we attempted the more hazardous occupations of the law, medicine, the arts, or business, there were always those homes, those relations, those friends of ours to fall back on, if we failed. No! We could never have to rely entirely on ourselves; we could never be pauperised—more than we were already! And a light burst in on me. That explained why my distant relative felt so keenly. It bit him, for he saw, of course, how dreadful it would be for these poor people of the working classes when legislation had succeeded in placing them in the humiliating position in which we already were—the dreadful position of having something to depend on apart from our own exertions, some sort of security in our lives. I saw it now. It was his secret pride, gnawing at him all the time, that made him so rabid on the point. He was longing, doubtless, day and night, not to have had a father who had land, and had left a sister well enough off to keep him while he was waiting for his job. He must be feeling how horribly degrading was the position of Claud—inheriting that land; and of Richard, who, just because he had served in the Indian Civil Service, had got to live on a pension all the rest of his days;

and of Willie, who was in danger at any moment, if his health—always delicate—gave out, of having a sinecure found for him by his college friends; and of Alan, whose educated charm had enabled him to marry an heiress and live by managing her estates. All, all sapped of go and foresight and perseverance by a cruel Providence! That was what he was really feeling, and concealing, because he was too well-bred to show his secret grief. And I felt suddenly quite warm toward him, now that I saw how he was suffering. I understood how bound he felt in honour to combat with all his force this attempt to place others in his own distressing situation. At the same time I was honest enough to confess to myself—sitting there in the cab—that I did not personally share that pride of his, or feel that I was being rotted by my own position; I even felt some dim gratitude that if my powers gave out at any time, and I had not saved anything, I should still not be left destitute to face the prospect of a bleak and impoverished old age; and I could not help a weak pleasure in the thought that a certain relative security was being guaranteed to those people of the working classes who had never had it before. At the same moment I quite saw that to a prouder and stronger heart it must indeed be

bitter to have to sit still under your own security, and even more bitter to have to watch that pauperising security coming closer and closer to others —for the generous soul is always more concerned for others than for himself. No doubt, I thought, if truth were known, my distant relative is consumed with longing to change places with that loafer who tried to open the door of my cab—for surely he must see, as I do, that that is just what he himself—having failed to stand the pressure of competition in his life—would be doing if it were not for the accident of his birth, which has so lamentably insured him against coming to that.

"Yes," I thought, "you have learnt something to-day; it does not do, you see, hastily to despise those distant relatives of yours, who talk about pauperising and molly-coddling the lower classes. No, no! One must look deeper than that! One must have generosity!"

And with that I stopped the cab and got out, for I wanted a breath of air.

1911.

THE BLACK GODMOTHER

SITTING out on the lawn at tea with our friend and his retriever, we had been discussing those massacres of the helpless which had of late occurred, and wondering that they should have been committed by the soldiery of so civilised a State, when, in a momentary pause of our astonishment, our friend, who had been listening in silence, crumpling the drooping soft ear of his dog, looked up and said, "The cause of atrocities is generally the violence of Fear. Panic's at the back of most crimes and follies."

Knowing that his philosophical statements were always the result of concrete instance, and that he would not tell us what that instance was if we asked him—such being his nature—we were careful not to agree.

He gave us a look out of those eyes of his, so like the eyes of a mild eagle, and said abruptly: "What do you say to this, then? . . . I was out in the dog-days last year with this fellow of mine, looking for Osmunda, and stayed some days in a village—never mind the name. Coming back one

evening from my tramp, I saw some boys stoning a mealy-coloured dog. I went up and told the young devils to stop it. They only looked at me in the injured way boys do, and one of them called out, 'It's mad, guv'nor!' I told them to clear off, and they took to their heels. The dog followed me. It was a young, leggy, mild-looking mongrel, cross—I should say—between a brown retriever and an Irish terrier. There was froth about its lips, and its eyes were watery; it looked indeed as if it might be in distemper. I was afraid of infection for this fellow of mine, and whenever it came too close shooed it away, till at last it slunk off altogether. Well, about nine o'clock, when I was settling down to write by the open window of my sitting-room—still daylight, and very quiet and warm—there began that most maddening sound, the barking of an unhappy dog. I could do nothing with that continual 'Yap—yap!' going on, and it was too hot to shut the window; so I went out to see if I could stop it. The men were all at the pub, and the women just finished with their gossip; there was no sound at all but the continual barking of this dog, somewhere away out in the fields. I travelled by ear across three meadows, till I came on a hay-stack by a pool of water. There was the dog sure enough—

the same mealy-coloured mongrel, tied to a stake, yapping, and making frantic little runs on a bit of rusty chain; whirling round and round the stake, then standing quite still, and shivering. I went up and spoke to it, but it backed into the hay-stack, and there it stayed shrinking away from me, with its tongue hanging out. It had been heavily struck by something on the head; the cheek was cut, one eye half-closed, and an ear badly swollen. I tried to get hold of it, but the poor thing was beside itself with fear. It snapped and flew round so that I had to give it up, and sit down with this fellow here beside me, to try and quiet it—a strange dog, you know, will generally form his estimate of you from the way it sees you treat another dog. I had to sit there quite half an hour before it would let me go up to it, pull the stake out, and lead it away. The poor beast, though it was so feeble from the blows it had received, was still half-frantic, and I didn't dare to touch it; and all the time I took good care that this fellow here didn't come too near. Then came the question what was to be done. There was no vet, of course, and I'd no place to put it except my sitting-room, which didn't belong to me. But, looking at its battered head, and its half-mad eyes, I thought: 'No trusting you with these

bumpkins; you'll have to come in here for the night!' Well, I got it in, and heaped two or three of those hairy little red rugs landladies are so fond of, up in a corner, and got it on to them, and put down my bread and milk. But it wouldn't eat—its sense of proportion was all gone, fairly destroyed by terror. It lay there moaning, and every now and then it raised its head with a 'yap' of sheer fright, dreadful to hear, and bit the air, as if its enemies were on it again; and this fellow of mine lay in the opposite corner, with his head on his paw, watching it. I sat up for a long time with that poor beast, sick enough, and wondering how it had come to be stoned and kicked and battered into this state; and next day I made it my business to find out." Our friend paused, scanned us a little angrily, and then went on: "It had made its first appearance, it seems, following a bicyclist. There are men, you know —save the mark—who, when their beasts get ill or too expensive, jump on their bicycles and take them for a quick run, taking care never to look behind them. When they get back home they say: 'Hallo! where's Fido?' Fido is nowhere, and there's an end! Well, this poor puppy gave up just as it got to our village; and, roaming about in search of water, attached itself to a farm la-

bourer. The man—with excellent intentions, as he told me himself—tried to take hold of it, but too abruptly, so that it was startled, and snapped at him. Whereon he kicked it for a dangerous cur, and it went drifting back toward the village, and fell in with the boys coming home from school. It thought, no doubt, that they were going to kick it too, and nipped one of them who took it by the collar. Thereupon they hullabalooed and stoned it down the road to where I found them. Then I put in my little bit of torture, and drove it away, through fear of infection to my own dog. After that it seems to have fallen in with a man who told me: 'Well, you see, he came sneakin' round my house, with the children playin', and snapped at them when they went to stroke him, so that they came running in to their mother, an' she called to me in a fine takin' about a mad dog. I ran out with a shovel and gave 'im one, and drove him out. I'm sorry if he wasn't mad, he looked it right enough; you can't be too careful with strange dogs.' Its next acquaintance was an old stone-breaker, a very decent sort. 'Well! you see,' the old man explained to me, 'the dog came smellin' round my stones, an' it wouldn' come near, an' it wouldn' go away; it was all froth and blood about the jaw, and its eyes glared green at me. I thought to meself, bein' the dog-days

—I don't like the look o' you, you look funny! So I took a stone, an' got it here, just on the ear; an' it fell over. And I thought to meself: Well, you've got to finish it, or it'll go bitin' somebody, for sure! But when I come to it with my hammer, the dog it got up—an' you know how it is when there's somethin' you've 'alf killed, and you feel sorry, and yet you feel you must finish it, an' you hit at it blind, you hit at it agen an' agen. The poor thing, it wriggled and snapped, an' I was terrified it'd bite me, an' some'ow it got away.'" Again our friend paused, and this time we dared not look at him.

"The next hospitality it was shown," he went on presently, "was by a farmer, who, seeing it all bloody, drove it off, thinking it had been digging up a lamb that he'd just buried. The poor homeless beast came sneaking back, so he told his men to get rid of it. Well, they got hold of it somehow —there was a hole in its neck that looked as if they'd used a pitchfork—and, mortally afraid of its biting them, but not liking, as they told me, to drown it, for fear the owner might come on them, they got a stake and a chain, and fastened it up, and left it in the water by the hay-stack where I found it. I had some conversation with that farmer. 'That's right,' he said, 'but who was to know? I couldn't have my sheep worried. The

brute had blood on his muzzle. These curs do a lot of harm when they've once been blooded. You can't run risks.'" Our friend cut viciously at a dandelion with his stick. "Run risks!" he broke out suddenly: "That was it—from beginning to end of that poor beast's sufferings, fear! From that fellow on the bicycle, afraid of the worry and expense, as soon as it showed signs of distemper, to myself and the man with the pitchfork—not one of us, I daresay, would have gone out of our way to do it a harm. But we felt fear, and so—by the law of self-preservation, or whatever you like—it all began, till there the poor thing was, with a battered head and a hole in its neck, ravenous with hunger, and too distraught even to lap my bread and milk. Yes, and there's something uncanny about a suffering animal—we sat watching it, and again we were afraid, looking at its eyes and the way it bit the air. Fear! It's the black godmother of all damnable things!"

Our friend bent down, crumpling and crumpling at his dog's ears. We, too, gazed at the ground, thinking of that poor lost puppy, and the horrible inevitability of all that happens, seeing men are what they are; thinking of all the foul doings in the world, whose black godmother is Fear.

"And what became of the poor dog?" one of us asked at last.

"When," said our friend slowly, "I'd had my fill of watching, I covered it with a rug, took this fellow away with me, and went to bed. There was nothing else to do. At dawn I was awakened by three dreadful cries—not like a dog's at all. I hurried down. There was the poor beast—wriggled out from under the rug—stretched on its side, dead. This fellow of mine had followed me in, and he went and sat down by the body. When I spoke to him he just looked round, and wagged his tail along the ground, but would not come away; and there he sat till it was buried, very interested, but not sorry at all."

Our friend was silent, looking angrily at something in the distance.

And we, too, were silent, seeing in spirit that vigil of early morning: The thin, lifeless, sandy-coloured body, stretched on those red mats; and this black creature—now lying at our feet—propped on its haunches like the dog in "The Death of Procris," patient, curious, ungrieved, staring down at it with his bright, interested eyes.

1912.

THE GRAND JURY—IN TWO PANELS AND A FRAME

I READ that piece of paper, which summoned me to sit on the Grand Jury at the approaching Sessions, lying in a scoop of the shore close to the great rollers of the sea—that span of eternal freedom, deprived just there of too great liberty by the word "Atlantic." And I remember thinking, as I read, that in each breaking wave was some particle which had visited every shore in all the world—that in each sparkle of hot sunlight stealing that bright water up into the sky, was the microcosm of all change, and of all unity.

PANEL I

In answer to that piece of paper, I presented myself at the proper place in due course and with a certain trepidation. What was it that I was about to do? For I had no experience of these things. And, being too early, I walked a little to and fro, looking at all those my partners in this matter of the purification of Society. Prosecutors, witnesses, officials, policemen, detectives, un-

detected, pressmen, barristers, loafers, clerks, cadgers, jurymen. And I remember having something of the feeling that one has when one looks into a sink without holding one's nose. There was such uneasy hurry, so strange a disenchanted look, a sort of spiritual dirt, about all that place, and there were—faces! And I thought: To them my face must seem as their faces seem to me!

Soon I was taken with my accomplices to have my name called, and to be sworn. I do not remember much about that process, too occupied with wondering what these companions of mine were like; but presently we all came to a long room with a long table, where nineteen lists of indictments and nineteen pieces of blotting paper were set alongside nineteen pens. We did not, I recollect, speak much to one another, but sat down, and studied those nineteen lists. We had eighty-seven cases on which to pronounce whether the bill was true or no; and the clerk assured us we should get through them in two days at most. Over the top of these indictments I regarded my eighteen fellows. There was in me a hunger of inquiry, as to what they thought about this business; and a sort of sorrowful affection for them, as if we were all a ship's company bound on some strange and awkward expedition. I wondered,

till I thought my wonder must be coming through my eyes, whether they had the same curious sensation that I was feeling, of doing something illegitimate, which I had not been born to do, together with a sense of self-importance, a sort of unholy interest in thus dealing with the lives of my fellow men. And slowly, watching them, I came to the conclusion that I need not wonder. All—with the exception perhaps of two, a painter and a Jew—looked such good citizens. I became gradually sure that they were not troubled with the lap and wash of speculation; undogged by any devastating sense of unity; pure of doubt, and undefiled by an uneasy conscience.

But now they began to bring us in the evidence. They brought it quickly. And at first we looked at it, whatever it was, with a sort of solemn excitement. Were we not arbiters of men's fates, purifiers of Society, more important by far than Judge or Common Jury? For if we did not bring in a true bill there was an end; the accused would be discharged.

We set to work, slowly at first, then faster and still faster, bringing in true bills; and after every one making a mark in our lists so that we might know where we were. We brought in true bills for burglary, and false pretences, larceny, and

fraud; we brought them in for manslaughter, rape, and arson. When we had ten or so, two of us would get up and bear them away down to the Court below and lay them before the Judge. "Thank you, gentlemen!" he would say, or words to that effect; and we would go up again, and go on bringing in true bills. I noticed that at the evidence of each fresh bill we looked with a little less excitement, and a little less solemnity, making every time a shorter tick and a shorter note in the margin of our lists. All the bills we had —fifty-seven—we brought in true. And the morning and the afternoon made that day, till we rested and went to our homes.

Next day we were all back in our places at the appointed hour, and, not greeting each other much, at once began to bring in bills. We brought them in, not quite so fast, as though some lurking megrim, some microbe of dissatisfaction with ourselves was at work within us. It was as if we wanted to throw one out, as if we felt our work too perfect. And presently it came. A case of defrauding one Sophie Liebermann, or Laubermann, or some such foreign name, by giving her one of those five-pound Christmas-card bank-notes just then in fashion, and receiving from her, as she alleged, three real sovereigns change. There

was a certain piquancy about the matter, and I well remember noticing how we sat a little forward and turned in our seats when they brought in the prosecutrix to give evidence. Pale, self-possessed, dressed in black, and rather comely, neither brazen nor furtive, speaking but poor English, her broad, matter-of-fact face, with its wide-set grey eyes and thickish nose and lips, made on me, I recollect, an impression of rather stupid honesty. I do not think they had told us in so many words what her calling was, nor do I remember whether she actually disclosed it, but by our demeanour I could tell that we had all realized what was the nature of the service rendered to the accused, in return for which he had given her this worthless note. In her rather guttural but pleasant voice she answered all our questions—not very far from tears, I think, but saved by native stolidity, and perhaps a little by the fear that purifiers of Society might not be the proper audience for emotion. When she had left us we recalled the detective, and still, as it were, touching the delicate matter with the tips of our tongues, so as not, being men of the world, to seem biassed against anything, we definitely elicited from him her profession and these words: "If she's speaking the truth, gentlemen; but, as you know, these women,

they don't always, specially the foreign ones!" When he, too, had gone, we looked at each other in unwonted silence. None of us quite liked, it seemed, to be first to speak. Then our foreman said: "There's no doubt, I think, that he gave her the note—mean trick, of course, but we can't have him on that alone—bit too irregular—no consideration in law, I take it."

He smiled a little at our smiles, and then went on: "The question, gentlemen, really seems to be, are we to take her word that she actually gave him change?" Again, for quite half a minute, we were silent, and then, the fattest one of us said, suddenly: "Very dangerous—goin' on the word of these women."

And at once, as if he had released something in our souls, we all (save two or three) broke out. It wouldn't do! It wasn't safe! Seeing what these women were! It was exactly as if, without word said, we had each been swearing the other to some secret compact to protect Society. As if we had been whispering to each other something like this: "These women—of course, we need them, but for all that we can't possibly recognise them as within the Law; we can't do that without endangering the safety of every one of us. In this matter we are trustees for all men—indeed,

even for ourselves, for who knows at what moment we might not ourselves require their services, and it would be exceedingly awkward if their word were considered the equal of our own!" Not one of us, certainly *said* anything so crude as this; none the less did many of us feel it. Then the foreman, looking slowly round the table, said: "Well, gentlemen, I think we are all agreed to throw out this bill"; and all, except the painter, the Jew, and one other, murmured: "Yes." And, as though, in throwing out this bill we had cast some trouble off our minds, we went on with the greater speed, bringing in true bills. About two o'clock we finished, and trooped down to the Court to be released. On the stairway the Jew came close, and, having examined me a little sharply with his velvety slits of eyes, as if to see that he was not making a mistake, said: "Ith fonny—we bring in eighty-thix bills true, and one we throw out, and the one we throw out we know it to be true, and the dirtieth job of the whole lot. Ith fonny!" "Yes," I answered him, "our sense of respectability does seem excessive." But just then we reached the Court, where, in his red robe and grey wig, with his clear-cut, handsome face, the judge seemed to shine and radiate, like sun through gloom. "I thank you, gentlemen," he said, in a

voice courteous and a little mocking, as though he had somewhere seen us before: "I thank you for the way in which you have performed your duties. I have not the pleasure of assigning to you anything for your services except the privilege of going over a prison, where you will be able to see what sort of existence awaits many of those to whose cases you have devoted so much of your valuable time. You are released, gentlemen."

Looking at each other a little hurriedly, and not taking too much farewell, for fear of having to meet again, we separated.

I was, then, free—free of the injunction of that piece of paper reposing in my pocket. Yet its influence was still upon me. I did not hurry away, but lingered in the courts, fascinated by the notion that the fate of each prisoner had first passed through my hands. At last I made an effort, and went out into the corridor. There I passed a woman whose figure seemed familiar. She was sitting with her hands in her lap looking straight before her, pale-faced and not uncomely, with thickish mouth and nose—the woman whose bill we had thrown out. Why was she sitting there? Had she not then realised that we had quashed her claim; or was she, like myself, kept here by mere attraction of the Law? Following I know not

what impulse, I said: "Your case was dismissed, wasn't it?" She looked up at me stolidly, and a tear, which had evidently been long gathering, dropped at the movement. "I do nod know; I waid to see," she said in her thick voice; "I tink there has been mistake." My face, no doubt, betrayed something of my sentiments about her case, for the thick tears began rolling fast down her pasty cheeks, and her pent-up feeling suddenly flowed forth in words: "I work 'ard; Gott! how I work hard! And there gomes dis liddle beastly man, and rob me. And they say: 'Ah! yes; but you are a bad woman, we don' trust you—you speak lie.' But I speak druth, I am nod a bad woman—I gome from Hamburg." "Yes, yes," I murmured; "yes, yes." "I do not know this country well, sir. I speak bad English. Is that why they do not drust my word?" She was silent for a moment, searching my face, then broke out again: "It is all 'ard work in my profession, I make very liddle, I cannot afford to be rob. Without the men I cannod make my living, I must drust them—and they rob me like this, it is too 'ard." And the slow tears rolled faster and faster from her eyes on to her hands and her black lap. Then quietly, and looking for a moment singularly like a big, unhappy child, she asked: "Will you blease

dell me, sir, why they will not give me the law of that dirty little man?"

I knew—and too well; but I could not tell her.

"You see," I said, "it's just a case of your word against his."

"Oh! no; but," she said eagerly, "he give me the note—I would not have taken it if I 'ad not thought it good, would I? That is sure, isn't it? But five pounds it is not my price. It must that I give 'im change! Those gentlemen that heard my case, they are men of business, they must know that it is not my price. If I could tell the judge —I think he is a man of business too—he would know that too, for sure. I am not so young. I am not so veree beautiful as all that; he must see, mustn't he, sir?"

At my wits' end how to answer that most strange question, I stammered out: "But, you know, your profession is outside the law."

At that a slow anger dyed her face. She looked down; then, suddenly lifting one of her dirty, ungloved hands, she laid it on her breast with the gesture of one baring to me the truth in her heart. "I am not a bad woman," she said: "Dat beastly little man, he do the same as me—I am free-woman, I am not a slave bound to do the same to-morrow night, no more than he. Such like him make

me what I am; he have all the pleasure, I have all the work. He give me noding—he rob my poor money, and he make me seem to strangers a bad woman. Oh, dear! I am not happy!"

The impulse I had been having to press on her the money, died within me; I felt suddenly it would be another insult. From the movement of her fingers about her heart I could not but see that this grief of hers was not about the money. It was the inarticulate outburst of a bitter sense of deep injustice; of all the dumb wondering at her own fate that went about with her behind that broad stolid face and bosom. This loss of the money was but a symbol of the furtive, hopeless insecurity she lived with day and night, now forced into the light, for herself and all the world to see. She felt it suddenly a bitter, unfair thing. This beastly little man did not share her insecurity. None of us shared it—none of us, who had brought her down to this. And, quite unable to explain to her how natural and proper it all was, I only murmured: "I am sorry, awfully sorry," and fled away.

PANEL II

It was just a week later when, having for passport my Grand Jury summons, I presented myself

at that prison where we had the privilege of seeing the existence to which we had assisted so many of the eighty-six.

"I'm afraid," I said to the guardian of the gate, "that I am rather late in availing myself—the others, no doubt——?"

"Not at all, sir," he said, smiling. "You're the first, and if you'll excuse me, I think you'll be the last. Will you wait in here while I send for the chief warder to take you over?"

He showed me then to what he called the Warder's Library—an iron-barred room, more bare and brown than any I had seen since I left school. While I stood there waiting and staring out into the prison court-yard, there came, rolling and rumbling in, a Black Maria. It drew up with a clatter, and I saw through the barred door the single prisoner—a young girl of perhaps eighteen—dressed in rusty black. She was resting her forehead against a bar and looking out, her quick, narrow dark eyes taking in her new surroundings with a sort of sharp, restless indifference; and her pale, thin-lipped, oval face quite expressionless. Behind those bars she seemed to me for all the world like a little animal of the cat tribe being brought in to her Zoo. Me she did not see, but if she had I felt she would not shrink—only give

me the same sharp, indifferent look she was giving all else. The policeman on the step behind had disappeared at once, and the driver now got down from his perch and, coming round, began to gossip with her. I saw her slink her eyes and smile at him, and he smiled back; a large man, not unkindly. Then he returned to his horses, and she stayed as before, with her forehead against the bars, just staring out. Watching her like that, unseen, I seemed to be able to see right through that tight-lipped, lynx-eyed mask. I seemed to know that little creature through and through, as one knows anything that one surprises off its guard, sunk in its most private moods. I seemed to see her little restless, furtive, utterly unmoral soul, so stripped of all defence, as if she had taken it from her heart and handed it out to me. I saw that she was one of those whose hands slip as indifferently into others' pockets as into their own; incapable of fidelity, and incapable of trusting; quick as cats, and as devoid of application; ready to scratch, ready to purr, ready to scratch again; quick to change, and secretly as unchangeable as a little pebble. And I thought: "Here we are, taking her to the Zoo (by no means for the first time, if demeanour be any guide), and we shall put her in a cage, and make her sew, and give her

good books which she will not read; and she will sew, and walk up and down, until we let her out; then she will return to her old haunts, and at once go prowling and do exactly the same again, whatever it was, until we catch her and lock her up once more. And in this way we shall go on purifying Society until she dies. And I thought: If indeed she had been created cat in body as well as in soul, we should not have treated her thus, but should have said: 'Go on, little cat, you scratch us sometimes, you steal often, you are as sensual as the night. All this we cannot help. It is your nature. So were you made—we know you cannot change—you amuse us! Go on, little cat!' Would it not then be better, and less savoury of humbug if we said the same to her whose cat-soul has chanced into this human shape? For assuredly she will but pilfer, and scratch a little, and be mildly vicious, in her little life, and do no desperate harm, having but poor capacity for evil behind that petty, thin-lipped mask. What is the good of all this padlock business for such as she; are we not making mountains out of her molehills? Where is our sense of proportion, and our sense of humour? Why try to alter the make and shape of Nature with our petty chisels? Or, if we must take care of her, to save ourselves, in the

name of Heaven *let us do it in a better way than this!* And suddenly I remembered that I was a Grand Juryman, a purifier of Society, who had brought her bill in true; and, that I might not think these thoughts unworthy of a good citizen, I turned my eyes away from her and took up my list of indictments. Yes, there she was, at least so I decided: Number 42, "Pilson, Jenny: Larceny, pocket-picking." And I turned my memory back to the evidence about her case, but I could not remember a single word. In the margin I had noted: "Incorrigible from a child up; bad surroundings." And a mad impulse came over me to go back to my window and call through the bars to her: "Jenny Pilson! Jenny Pilson! It was I who bred you and surrounded you with evil! It was I who caught you for being what I made you! I brought your bill in true! I judged you, and I caged you! Jenny Pilson! Jenny Pilson!" But just as I reached the window, the door of my waiting-room was fortunately opened, and a voice said: "Now, sir; at your service!" . . .

I sat again in that scoop of the shore by the long rolling seas, burying in the sand the piece of paper which had summoned me away to my Grand Jury; and the same thoughts came to me with the break-

ing of the waves that had come to me before: How, in every wave was a particle that had known the shore of every land; and in each sparkle of the hot sunlight stealing up that bright water into the sky, the microcosm of all change and of all unity!

1912.

GONE

NOT possible to conceive of rarer beauty than that which clung about the summer day three years ago when first we had the news of the poor Herds. Loveliness was a net of golden filaments in which the world was caught. It was gravity itself, so tranquil; and it was a sort of intoxicating laughter. From the top field that we crossed to go down to their cottage, all the far sweep of those outstretched wings of beauty could be seen. Very wonderful was the poise of the sacred bird, that moved nowhere but in our hearts. The lime-tree scent was just stealing out into air for some days already bereft of the scent of hay; and the sun was falling to his evening home behind our pines and beeches. It was no more than radiant warm. And, as we went, we wondered why we had not been told before that Mrs. Herd was so very ill. It was foolish to wonder—these people do not speak of suffering till it is late. To speak, when it means what this meant—loss of wife and mother—was to flatter reality too much. To be healthy, or—die! That is their

creed. To go on till they drop—then very soon pass away! What room for states between—on their poor wage, in their poor cottages?

We crossed the mill-stream in the hollow—to their white, thatched dwelling; silent, already awed, almost resentful of this so-varying Scheme of Things. At the gateway Herd himself was standing, just in from his work. For work in the country does not wait on illness—even death claims from its onlookers but a few hours, birth none at all. And it is as well; for what must be must, and in work alone man rests from grief. Sorrow and anxiety had made strange alteration already in Herd's face. Through every crevice of the rough, stolid mask the spirit was peeping, a sort of quivering suppliant, that seemed to ask all the time: "Is it true?" A regular cottager's figure, this of Herd's—a labourer of these parts—strong, slow, but active, with just a touch of the untamed somewhere, about the swing and carriage of him, about the strong jaw, and wide thick-lipped mouth; just that something independent, which, in great variety, clings to the natives of these still remote, half-pagan valleys by the moor.

We all moved silently to the lee of the outer wall, so that our voices might not carry up to the sick woman lying there under the eaves, almost

within hand reach. "Yes, sir." "No, sir." "Yes, ma'am." This, and the constant, unforgettable supplication of his eyes, was all that came from him; yet he seemed loath to let us go, as though he thought we had some mysterious power to help him—the magic, perhaps, of money, to those who have none. Grateful at our promise of another doctor, a specialist, he yet seemed with his eyes to say that he knew that such were only embroideries of Fate. And when we had wrung his hand and gone, we heard him coming after us. His wife had said she would like to see us, please. Would we come up?

An old woman and Mrs. Herd's sister were in the sitting-room; they showed us to the crazy, narrow stairway. Though we lived distant but four hundred yards of a crow's flight, we had never seen Mrs. Herd before, for that is the way of things in this land of minding one's own business—a slight, dark, girlish-looking woman, almost quite refined away, and with those eyes of the dying, where the spirit is coming through, as it only does when it knows that all is over except just the passing. She lay in a double bed, with clean white sheets. A white-washed room, so low that the ceiling almost touched our heads, some flowers in a bowl, the small lattice window open. Though it was hot

in there, it was better far than the rooms of most families in towns, living on a wage of twice as much; for here was no sign of defeat in decency or cleanliness. In her face, as in poor Herd's, was that same strange mingling of resigned despair and almost eager appeal, so terrible to disappoint. Yet, trying not to disappoint it, one felt guilty of treachery. What was the good, the kindness, in making this poor bird flutter still with hope against the bars, when fast prison had so surely closed in round her? But what else could we do? We could not give her those glib assurances that naïve souls make so easily to others concerning their after state.

Secretly, I think, we knew that her philosophy of calm reality, that queer and unbidden growing tranquillity which precedes death, was nearer to our own belief, than would be any gilt-edged orthodoxy; but nevertheless (such is the strength of what is expected), we felt it dreadful that we could not console her with the ordinary presumptions.

"You mustn't give up hope," we kept on saying: "The new doctor will do a lot for you; he's a specialist—a very clever man."

And she kept on answering: "Yes, sir." "Yes, ma'am." But still her eyes went on asking, as if there were something else she wanted. And then to one of us came an inspiration:

"You mustn't let your husband worry about expense. That will be all right."

She smiled then, as if the chief cloud on her soul had been the thought of the arrears her illness and death would leave weighing on him with whom she had shared this bed ten years and more. And with that smile warming the memory of those spirit-haunted eyes, we crept down-stairs again, and out into the fields.

It was more beautiful than ever, just touched already with evening mystery—it was better than ever to be alive. And the immortal wonder that has haunted man since first he became man, and haunts, I think, even the animals—the unanswerable question, why joy and beauty must ever be walking hand in hand with ugliness and pain—haunted us across those fields of life and loveliness. It was all right, no doubt, even reasonable, since without dark there is no light. It was part of that unending sum whose answer is not given; the merest little swing of the great pendulum! And yet—! To accept this violent contrast without a sigh of revolt, without a question! No sirs, it was not so jolly as all that! That she should be dying there at thirty, of a creeping malady which she might have checked, perhaps, if she had not had too many things to do for the children and

husband, to do anything for herself—if she had not been forced to hold the creed: Be healthy, or die! This was no doubt perfectly explicable and in accordance with the Supreme Equation; yet we, enjoying life, and health, and ease of money, felt horror and revolt on this evening of such beauty. Nor at the moment did we derive great comfort from the thought that life slips in and out of sheath, like sun-sparks on water, and that of all the cloud of summer midges dancing in the last gleam, not one would be alive to-morrow.

It was three evenings later that we heard uncertain footfalls on the flagstones of the verandah, then a sort of brushing sound against the wood of the long, open window. Drawing aside the curtain, one of us looked out. Herd was standing there in the bright moonlight, barcheaded, with roughened hair. He came in, and seeming not to know quite where he went, took stand by the hearth, and putting up his dark hand, gripped the mantelshelf. Then, as if recollecting himself, he said: "Gude evenin', sir; beg pardon, M'm." No more for a full minute; but his hand, taking some little china thing, turned it over and over without ceasing, and down his broken face tears ran. Then, very suddenly, he said: "She's gone." And his hand turned over and over that

little china thing, and the tears went on rolling down. Then, stumbling, and swaying like a man in drink, he made his way out again into the moonlight. We watched him across the lawn and path, and through the gate, till his footfalls died out there in the field, and his figure was lost in the black shadow of the holly hedge.

And the night was so beautiful, so utterly, glamourously beautiful, with its star-flowers, and its silence, and its trees clothed in moonlight. All was tranquil as a dream of sleep. But it was long before our hearts, wandering with poor Herd, would let us remember that she had slipped away into so beautiful a dream.

The dead do not suffer from their rest in beauty. But the living——!

1911.

THRESHING

WHEN the drone of the thresher breaks through the autumn sighing of trees and wind, or through that stillness of the first frost, I get restless and more restless, till, throwing down my pen, I have gone out to see. For there is nothing like the sight of threshing for making one feel good—not in the sense of comfort, but at heart. There, under the pines and the already leafless elms and beech-trees, close to the great stacks, is the big, busy creature, with its small black puffing engine astern; and there, all around it, is that conglomeration of unsentimental labour which invests all the crises of farm work with such fascination. The crew of the farm is only five all told, but to-day they are fifteen, and none strangers, save the owners of the travelling thresher.

They are working without respite and with little speech, not at all as if they had been brought together for the benefit of some one else's corn, but as though they, one and all, had a private grudge against Time and a personal pleasure in finishing this job, which, while it lasts, is bringing

them extra pay and most excellent free feeding. Just as after a dilatory voyage a crew will brace themselves for the run in, recording with sudden energy their consciousness of triumph over the elements, so on a farm the harvests of hay and corn, sheep-shearing, and threshing will bring out in all a common sentiment, a kind of sporting energy, a defiant spurt, as it were, to score off Nature; for it is only a philosopher here and there among them, I think, who sees that Nature is eager to be scored off in this fashion, being anxious that some one should eat her kindly fruits.

With ceremonial as grave as that which is at work within the thresher itself, the tasks have been divided. At the root of all things, pitchforking from the stack, stands the farmer, moustached, and always upright—was he not in the Yeomanry?—dignified in a hard black hat, no waistcoat, and his working coat so ragged that it would never cling to him but for pure affection. Between him and the body of the machine are five more pitchforks, directing the pale flood of raw material. There, amongst them, is poor Herd, still so sad from his summer loss, plodding doggedly away. To watch him even now makes one feel how terrible is that dumb grief which has never learned to moan. And there is George Yeoford, almost too

sober; and Murdon plying his pitchfork with a supernatural regularity that cannot quite dim his queer brigand's face of dark, soft gloom shot with sudden humours, his soft, dark corduroys and battered hat. Occasionally he stops, and taking off that hat, wipes his corrugated brow under black hair, and seems to brood over his own regularity.

Down here, too, where I stand, each separate function of the thresher has its appointed slave. Here Cedric rakes the chaff pouring from the side down into the chaff-shed. Carting the straw that streams from the thresher bows, are Michelmore and Neck—the little man who cannot read, but can milk and whistle the hearts out of his cows till they follow him like dogs. At the thresher's stern is Morris, the driver, selected because of that utter reliability which radiates from his broad, handsome face. His part is to attend the sacking of the three kinds of grain for ever sieving out. He murmurs: "Busy work, sir!" and opens a little door to show me how "the machinery does it all," holding a sack between his knees and some string in his white teeth. Then away goes the sack—four bushels, one hundred and sixty pounds of "genuines, seconds, or seed"—wheeled by Cedric on a little trolley thing, to where George-

the-Gaul or Jim-the-Early-Saxon is waiting to bear it on his back up the stone steps into the corn-chamber.

It has been raining in the night; the ground is a churn of straw and mud, and the trees still drip; but now there is sunlight, a sweet air, and clear sky, wine-coloured through the red, naked, beech-twigs tipped with white untimely buds. Nothing can be more lovely than this late autumn day, so still, save for the droning of the thresher and the constant tinny chuckle of the grey, thin-headed Guinea-fowl, driven by this business away from their usual haunts.

And soon the feeling that I knew would come begins creeping over me, the sense of an extraordinary sanity in this never-ceasing harmonious labour pursued in the autumn air faintly perfumed with wood-smoke, with the scent of chaff, and whiffs from that black puffing-Billy; the sense that there is nothing between this clean toil—not too hard but hard enough—and the clean consumption of its clean results; the sense that nobody except myself is in the least conscious of how sane it all is. The brains of these sane ones are all too busy with the real affairs of life, the disposition of their wages, anticipation of dinner, some girl, some junketing, some wager, the last rifle match, and,

more than all, with that pleasant rhythmic nothingness, companion of the busy swing and play of muscles, which of all states is secretly most akin to the deep unconsciousness of life itself. Thus to work in the free air for the good of all and the hurt of none, without worry or the breath of acrimony—surely no phase of human life so nears the life of the truly civilised community—the life of a hive of bees. Not one of these working so sanely—unless it be Morris, who will spend his Sunday afternoon on some high rock just watching sunlight and shadow drifting on the moors—not one, I think, is distraught by perception of his own sanity, by knowledge of how near he is to Harmony, not even by appreciation of the still radiance of this day, or its innumerable fine shades of colour. It is all work, and no moody consciousness—all work, and will end in sleep.

I leave them soon, and make my way up the stone steps to the "corn chamber," where tranquillity is crowned. In the whitewashed room the corn lies in drifts and ridges, three to four feet deep, all silvery-dun, like some remote sand desert, lifeless beneath the moon. Here it lies, and into it, staggering under the sacks, George-the-Gaul and Jim-the-Early-Saxon tramp up to their knees, spill the sacks over their heads, and out

again; and above where their feet have plunged the patient surface closes again, smooth. And as I stand there in the doorway, looking at that silvery corn drift, I think of the whole process, from seed sown to the last sieving into this tranquil resting-place. I think of the slow, dogged ploughman, with the crows above him on the wind; of the swing of the sower's arm, dark up against grey sky on the steep field. I think of the seed snug-burrowing for safety, and its mysterious ferment under the warm Spring rain, of the soft green shoots tapering up so shyly toward the first sun, and hardening in air to thin wiry stalk. I think of the unnumerable tiny beasts that have jungled in that pale forest; of the winged blue jewels of butterfly risen from it to hover on the wild-rustling blades; of that continual music played there by the wind; of the chicory and poppy flowers that have been its lights-o'-love, as it grew tawny and full of life, before the appointed date when it should return to its captivity. I think of that slow-travelling hum and swish which laid it low, of the gathering to stack, and the long waiting under the rustle and drip of the sheltering trees, until yesterday the hoot of the thresher blew, and there began the falling into this dun silvery peace. Here it will lie with the pale sun

narrowly filtering in on it, and by night the pale moon, till slowly, week by week, it is stolen away, and its ridges and drifts sink and sink, and the beasts have eaten it all. . . .

When the dusk is falling, I go out to them again. They have nearly finished now; the chaff in the chaff-shed is mounting hillock-high; only the little barley stack remains unthreshed. Mrs. George-the-Gaul is standing with a jug to give drink to the tired ones. Some stars are already netted in the branches of the pines; the Guinea-fowl are silent. But still the harmonious thresher hums and showers from three sides the straw, the chaff, the corn; and the men fork, and rake, and cart, and carry, sleep growing in their muscles, silence on their tongues, and the tranquillity of the long day nearly ended in their souls. They will go on till it is quite dark.

1911.

THAT OLD-TIME PLACE

"YES, suh—here we are at that old-time place!" And our dark driver drew up his little victoria gently.

Through the open doorway, into a dim, cavernous, ruined house of New Orleans we passed. The mildew and dirt, the dark denuded dankness of that old hostel, rotting down with damp and time!

And our guide, the tall, thin, grey-haired dame, who came forward with such native ease and moved before us, touching this fungused wall, that rusting stairway, and telling, as it were, no one in her soft, slow speech, things that any one could see—what a strange and fitting figure!

Before the smell of the deserted, oozing rooms, before that old creature leading us on and on, negligent of all our questions, and talking to the air, as though we were not, we felt such discomfort that we soon made to go out again into such freshness as there was on that day of dismal heat. Then realising, it seemed, that she was losing us, our old guide turned; for the first time looking in our faces, she smiled, and said in her sweet, weak voice, like the sound from the strings of a spinet

long unplayed on: "Don' you wahnd to see the dome-room: an' all the other rooms right here, of this old-time place?"

Again those words! We had not the hearts to disappoint her. And as we followed on and on, along the mouldering corridors and rooms where the black peeling papers hung like stalactites, the dominance of our senses gradually dropped from us, and with our souls we saw its soul—the soul of this old-time place; this mustering house of the old South, bereft of all but ghosts and the grey pigeons niched in the rotting gallery round a narrow courtyard open to the sky.

"This is the dome-room, suh and lady; right over the slave-market it is. Here they did the business of the State—sure; old-time heroes up there in the roof—Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, Davis, Lee—there they are! All gone—now! Yes, suh!"

A fine—yea, even a splendid room, of great height, and carved grandeur, with hand-wrought bronze sconces and a band of metal bordering, all blackened with oblivion. And the faces of those old heroes encircling that domed ceiling were blackened too, and scarred with damp, beyond recognition. Here, beneath their gaze, men had banqueted and danced and ruled. The pride

and might and vivid strength of things still fluttered their uneasy flags of spirit, moved disherited wings! Those old-time feasts and grave discussions—we seemed to see them printed on the thick air, imprisoned in this great chamber built above their dark foundations. The pride and the might and the vivid strength of things—gone, all gone!

We became conscious again of that soft, weak voice.

"Not hearing very well, suh, I have it all printed, lady—beautifully told here—yes, indeed!"

She was putting cards into our hands; then, impassive, maintaining ever her impersonal chant, the guardian of past glory led us on.

"Now we shall see the slave-market—downstairs, underneath! It's wet for the lady—the water comes in now—yes, suh!"

On the crumbling black and white marble floorings the water indeed was trickling into pools. And down in the halls there came to us wandering —strangest thing that ever strayed through deserted grandeur—a brown, broken horse, lean, with a sore flank and a head of tremendous age. It stopped and gazed at us, as though we might be going to give it things to eat, then passed on, stumbling over the ruined marbles. For a mo-

ment we had thought him ghost—one of the many. But he was not, since his hoofs sounded. The scrambling clatter of them had died out into silence before we came to that dark, crypt-like chamber whose marble columns were ringed in iron, veritable pillars of foundation. And then we saw that our old guide's hands were full of newspapers. She struck a match; they caught fire and blazed. Holding high that torch, she said: "See! Up there's his name, above where he stood. The auctioneer. Oh yes, indeed! Here's where they sold them!"

Below that name, decaying on the wall, we had the slow, uncanny feeling of some one standing there in the gleam and flicker from that paper torch. For a moment the whole shadowy room seemed full of forms and faces. Then the torch died out, and our old guide, pointing through an archway with the blackened stump of it, said:

"'Twas here they kept them—indeed, yes!"

We saw before us a sort of vault, stone-built, and low, and long. The light there was too dim for us to make out anything but walls and heaps of rusting scrap-iron cast away there and mouldering down. But trying to pierce that darkness we became conscious, as it seemed, of innumerable eyes gazing, not at us, but through the archway where

we stood; innumerable white eyeballs gleaming out of blackness. From behind us came a little laugh. It floated past through the archway, toward those eyes. Who was that? Who laughed in there? The old South itself—that incredible, fine, lost soul! That "old-time" thing of old ideals, blindfolded by its own history! That queer proud blend of simple chivalry and tyranny, of piety and the abhorrent thing! Who was it laughed there in the old slave-market—laughed at these white eyeballs glaring from out of the blackness of their dark cattle-pen? What poor departed soul in this House of Melancholy? But there was no ghost when we turned to look—only our old guide with her sweet smile.

"Yes, suh. Here they all came—'twas the finest hotel—before the war-time; old Southern families—buyin' an' sellin' their property. Yes, ma'am, very interesting! This way! And here were the bells to all the rooms. Broken, you see—all broken!"

And rather quickly we passed away, out of that "old-time place"; where something had laughed, and the drip, drip, drip of water down the walls was as the sound of a spirit grieving.

1912.

ROMANCE—THREE GLEAMS

I

ON that New Year's morning when I drew up the blind it was still nearly dark, but for the faintest pink flush glancing out there on the horizon of black water. The far shore of the river's mouth was just soft dusk; and the dim trees below me were in perfect stillness. There was no lap of water. And then—I saw her, drifting in on the tide—the little ship, passaging below me, a happy ghost. Like no thing of this world she came, ending her flight, with sail-wings closing and her glowing lantern eyes. There was I know not what of stealthy joy about her thus creeping in to the unexpecting land. And I wished she would never pass, but go on gliding by down there for ever with her dark ropes, and her bright lanterns, and her mysterious felicity, so that I might have for ever in my heart the blessed feeling she brought me, coming like this out of that great mystery the sea. If only she need not change to solidity, but ever be this visitor from the unknown, this sacred bird, telling with her half-seen, trailing-down plume-sails the story of uncharted wonder. If

only I might go on trembling, as I was, with the rapture of all I did not know and could not see, yet felt pressing against me and touching my face with its lips! To think of her at anchor in cold light was like flinging-to a door in the face of happiness. And just then she struck her bell; the faint silvery far-down sound fled away before her, and to every side, out into the utter hush, to discover echo. But nothing answered, as if fearing to break the spell of her coming, to brush with reality the dark sea dew from her sail-wings. But within *me*, in response, there began the song of all unknown things; the song so tenuous, so ecstatic, that seems to sweep and quiver across such thin golden strings, and like an eager dream dies too soon. The song of the secret-knowing wind that has peered through so great forests and over such wild sea; blown on so many faces, and in the jungles of the grass—the song of all that the wind has seen and felt. The song of lives that I should never live; of the loves that I should never love—singing to me as though I should! And suddenly I felt that I could not bear my little ship of dreams to grow hard and grey, her bright lanterns drowned in the cold light, her dark ropes spidery and taut, her sea-wan sails all furled, and she no more enchanted; and turning away I let fall the curtain.

II

Then what happens to the moon? She, who, shy and veiled, slips out before dusk to take the air of heaven, wandering timidly among the columned clouds, and fugitive from the staring of the sun; she, who, when dusk has come, rules the sentient night with such chaste and icy spell—whither and how does she retreat?

I came on her one morning—I surprised her. She was stealing into a dark wintry wood, and five little stars were chasing her. She was orange-hooded, a light-o'-love dismissed—unashamed and unfatigued, having taken all. And she was looking back with her almond eyes, across her dark-ivory shoulder, at Night where he still lay drowned in the sleep she had brought him. What a strange, slow, mocking look! So might Aphrodite herself have looked back at some weary lover, remembering the fire of his first embrace. Insatiate, smiling creature, slipping down to the rim of the world to her bath in the sweet waters of dawn, whence emerging, pure as a water lily, she would float in the cool sky till evening came again! And just then she saw me looking, and hid behind a holm-oak tree; but I could still see the gleam of one shoulder and her long narrow eyes

pursuing me. I went up to the tree and parted its dark boughs to take her; but she had slipped behind another. I called to her to stand, if only for one moment. But she smiled and went slipping on, and I ran thrusting through the wet bushes, leaping the fallen trunks. The scent of rotting leaves disturbed by my feet leaped out into the darkness, and birds, surprised, fluttered away. And still I ran—she slipping ever further into the grove, and ever looking back at me. And I thought: But I will catch you yet, you nymph of perdition! The wood will soon be passed, you will have no cover then! And from her eyes, and the scanty gleam of her flying limbs, I never looked away, not even when I stumbled or ran against tree trunks in my blind haste. And at every clearing I flew more furiously, thinking to seize all of her with my gaze before she could cross the glade; but ever she found some little low tree, some bush of birch ungrown, or the far top branches of the next grove to screen her flying body and preserve allurement. And all the time she was dipping, dipping to the rim of the world. And then I tripped; but, as I rose, I saw that she had lingered for me; her long sliding eyes were full, it seemed to me, of pity, as if she would have liked for me to have enjoyed the sight of her. I stood

still, breathless, thinking that at last she would consent; but flinging back, up into the air, one dark-ivory arm, she sighed and vanished. And the breath of her sigh stirred all the birch-tree twigs just coloured with the dawn. Long I stood in that thicket gazing at the spot where she had leapt from me over the edge of the world—my heart quivering.

III

We embarked on the estuary steamer that winter morning just as daylight came full. The sun was on the wing scattering little white clouds, as an eagle might scatter doves. They scurried up before him with their broken feathers tipped and tinged with gold. In the air was a touch of frost, and a smoky mist-drift clung here and there above the reeds, blurring the shores of the lagoon so that we seemed to be steaming across boundless water, till some clump of trees would fling its top out of the fog, then fall back into whiteness.

And then, in that thick vapour, rounding I suppose some curve, we came suddenly into we knew not what—all white and moving it was, as if the mist were crazed; murmuring, too, with a sort of restless beating. We seemed to be passing through a ghost—the ghost of all the life that had sprung

from this water and its shores; we seemed to have left reality, to be travelling through live wonder.

And the fantastic thought sprang into my mind: I have died. This is the voyage of my soul in the wild. I am in the final wilderness of spirits—lost in the ghost robe that wraps the earth. There seemed in all this white murmuration to be millions of tiny hands stretching out to me, millions of whispering voices, of wistful eyes. I had no fear, but a curious baffled eagerness, the strangest feeling of having lost myself and become part of this around me; exactly as if my own hands and voice and eyes had left me and were groping, and whispering, and gazing out there in the eeriness. I was no longer a man on an estuary steamer, but part of sentient ghostliness. Nor did I feel unhappy; it seemed as though I had never been anything but this Bedouin spirit wandering.

We passed through again into the stillness of plain mist, and all those eerie sensations went, leaving nothing but curiosity to know what this was that we had traversed. Then suddenly the sun came flaring out, and we saw behind us thousands and thousands of white gulls dipping, wheeling, brushing the water with their wings, bewitched with sun and mist. That was all. And yet—

that white-winged legion through whom we had ploughed our way were not, could never be, to me just gulls—there was more than mere sun-glamour gilding their misty plumes; there was the wizardry of my past wonder, the enchantment of romance.

1912.

MEMORIES

WE set out to meet him at Waterloo Station on a dull day of February—I, who had owned his impetuous mother, knowing a little what to expect, while to my companion he would be all original. We stood there waiting (for the Salisbury train was late), and wondering with a warm, half-fearful eagerness what sort of new thread Life was going to twine into our skein. I think our chief dread was that he might have light eyes—those yellow Chinese eyes of the common, parti-coloured spaniel. And each new minute of the train's tardiness increased our anxious compassion: His first journey; his first separation from his mother; this black two-months' baby! Then the train ran in, and we hastened to look for him. "Have you a dog for us?"

"A dog! Not in this van. Ask the rear-guard."

"Have you a dog for us?"

"That's right. From Salisbury. Here's your wild beast, sir!"

From behind a wooden crate we saw a long black

muzzled nose poking round at us, and heard a faint hoarse whimpering.

I remember my first thought:

"Isn't his nose too long?"

But to my companion's heart it went at once, because it was swollen from crying and being pressed against things that he could not see through. We took him out—soft, wobbly, tearful; set him down on his four, as yet not quite simultaneous legs, and regarded him. Or, rather, my companion did, having her head on one side, and a quavering smile; and I regarded her, knowing that I should thereby get a truer impression of him.

He wandered a little round our legs, neither wagging his tail nor licking at our hands; then he looked up, and my companion said: "He's an angel!"

I was not so certain. He seemed hammer-headed, with no eyes at all, and little connection between his head, his body, and his legs. His ears were very long, as long as his poor nose; and gleaming down in the blackness of him I could see the same white star that disgraced his mother's chest.

Picking him up, we carried him to a four-wheeled cab, and took his muzzle off. His little dark-brown eyes were resolutely fixed on distance, and

by his refusal to even smell the biscuits we had brought to make him happy, we knew that the human being had not yet come into a life that had contained so far only a mother, a wood-shed, and four other soft, wobbly, black, hammer-headed angels, smelling of themselves, and warmth, and wood shavings. It was pleasant to feel that to us he would surrender an untouched love, that is, if he would surrender anything. Suppose he did not take to us!

And just then something must have stirred in him, for he turned up his swollen nose and stared at my companion, and a little later rubbed the dry pinkness of his tongue against my thumb. In that look, and that unconscious restless lick, he was trying hard to leave unhappiness behind, trying hard to feel that these new creatures with stroking paws and queer scents, were his mother; yet all the time he knew, I am sure, that they were something bigger, more permanently, desperately, his. The first sense of being owned, perhaps (who knows) of owning, had stirred in him. He would never again be quite the same unconscious creature.

A little way from the end of our journey we got out and dismissed the cab. He could not too soon know the scents and pavements of this London

where the chief of his life must pass. I can see now his first bumble down that wide, back-water of a street, how continually and suddenly he sat down to make sure of his own legs, how continually he lost our heels. He showed us then in full perfection what was afterwards to be an inconvenient—if endearing—characteristic: At any call or whistle he would look in precisely the opposite direction. How many times all through his life have I not seen him, at my whistle, start violently and turn his tail to me, then, with nose thrown searchingly from side to side, begin to canter toward the horizon!

In that first walk, we met, fortunately, but one vehicle, a brewer's dray; he chose that moment to attend to the more serious affairs of life, sitting quietly before the horses' feet and requiring to be moved by hand. From the beginning he had his dignity, and was extremely difficult to lift, owing to the length of his middle distance.

What strange feelings must have stirred in his little white soul when he first smelled carpet! But it was all so strange to him that day—I doubt if he felt more than I did when I first travelled to my private school, reading "Tales of a Grandfather," and plied with tracts and sherry by my father's man of business.

That night, indeed, for several nights, he slept with me, keeping me too warm down my back, and waking me now and then with quaint sleepy whimperings. Indeed, all through his life he flew a good deal in his sleep, fighting dogs and seeing ghosts, running after rabbits and thrown sticks; and to the last one never quite knew whether or no to rouse him when his four black feet began to jerk and quiver. His dreams were like our dreams, both good and bad; happy sometimes, sometimes tragic to weeping point.

He ceased to sleep with me the day we discovered that he was a perfect little colony, whose settlers were of an active species which I have never seen again. After that he had many beds, for circumstance ordained that his life should be nomadic, and it is to this I trace that philosophic indifference to place or property, which marked him out from most of his own kind. He learned early that for a black dog with long silky ears, a feathered tail, and head of great dignity, there was no home whatsoever, away from those creatures with special scents, who took liberties with his name, and alone of all created things were privileged to smack him with a slipper. He would sleep anywhere, so long as it was in their room, or so close outside it as to make no matter, for it was

with him a principle that what he did not smell did not exist. I would I could hear again those long rubber-lipped snufflings of recognition underneath the door, with which each morning he would regale and reassure a spirit that grew with age more and more nervous and delicate about this matter of propinquity! For he was a dog of fixed ideas, things stamped on his mind were indelible; as, for example, his duty toward cats, for whom he had really a perverse affection, which had led to that first disastrous moment of his life, when he was brought up, poor bewildered puppy, from a brief excursion to the kitchen, with one eye closed and his cheek torn! He bore to his grave that jagged scratch across the eye. It was in dread of a repetition of this tragedy that he was instructed at the word "Cats" to rush forward with a special "tow-row-rowing," which he never used toward any other form of creature. To the end he cherished a hope that he would reach the cat, but never did; and if he had, we knew he would only have stood and wagged his tail; but I well remember once, when he returned, important, from some such sally, how dreadfully my companion startled a cat-loving friend by murmuring in her most honeyed voice: "Well, my darling, have you been killing pussies in the garden?"

His eye and nose were impeccable in their sense of form; indeed, he was very English in that matter: People must be just so; things smell properly; and affairs go on in the one right way. He could tolerate neither creatures in ragged clothes, nor children on their hands and knees, nor postmen, because, with their bags, they swelled-up on one side, and carried lanterns on their stomachs. He would never let the harmless creatures pass without religious barks. Naturally a believer in authority and routine, and distrusting spiritual adventure, he yet had curious fads that seemed to have nested in him, quite outside of all principle. He would, for instance, follow neither carriages nor horses, and if we tried to make him, at once left for home, where he would sit with nose raised to Heaven, emitting through it a most lugubrious, shrill noise. Then again, one must not place a stick, a slipper, a glove, or anything with which he could play, upon one's head—since such an action reduced him at once to frenzy. For so conservative a dog, his environment was sadly anarchistic. He never complained in words of our shifting habits, but curled his head round over his left paw and pressed his chin very hard against the ground whenever he smelled packing. What necessity,—he seemed continually to be saying,—

what real necessity is there for change of any kind whatever? Here we were all together, and one day was like another, so that I knew where I was —and now *you* only know what will happen next; and *I*—I can't tell you whether I shall be with you when it happens! What strange, grieving minutes a dog passes at such times in the underground of his subconsciousness, refusing realisation, yet all the time only too well divining. Some careless word, some unmuted compassion in voice, the stealthy wrapping of a pair of boots, the unaccustomed shutting of a door that ought to be open, the removal from a down-stair room of an object always there—one tiny thing, and he knows for certain that he is not going too. He fights against the knowledge just as we do against what we cannot bear; he gives up hope, but not effort, protesting in the only way he knows of, and now and then heaving a great sigh. Those sighs of a dog! They go to the heart so much more deeply than the sighs of our own kind, because they are utterly unintended, regardless of effect, emerging from one who, heaving them, knows not that they have escaped him!

The words: "Yes—going too!" spoken in a certain tone, would call up in his eyes a still-questioning half-happiness, and from his tail a quiet flutter,

but did not quite serve to put to rest either his doubt or his feeling that it was all unnecessary—until the cab arrived. Then he would pour himself out of door or window, and be found in the bottom of the vehicle, looking severely away from an admiring cabman. Once settled on our feet he travelled with philosophy, but no digestion.

I think no dog was ever more indifferent to an outside world of human creatures; yet few dogs have made more conquests—especially among strange women, through whom, however, he had a habit of looking—very discouraging. He had, natheless, one or two particular friends, such as him to whom this book is dedicated, and a few persons whom he knew he had seen before, but, broadly speaking, there were in his world of men, only his mistress, and—the almighty.

Each August, till he was six, he was sent for health, and the assuagement of his hereditary instincts, up to a Scotch shooting, where he carried many birds in a very tender manner. Once he was compelled by Fate to remain there nearly a year; and we went up ourselves to fetch him home. Down the long avenue toward the keeper's cottage we walked. It was high autumn; there had been frost already, for the ground was fine with red and yellow leaves; and presently we saw himself com-

ing, professionally questing among those leaves, and preceding his dear keeper with the business-like self-containment of a sportsman; not too fat, glossy as a raven's wing, swinging his ears and sporran like a little Highlander. We approached him silently. Suddenly his nose went up from its imagined trail, and he came rushing at our legs. From him, as a garment drops from a man, dropped all his strange soberness; he became in a single instant one fluttering eagerness. He leaped from life to life in one bound, without hesitation, without regret. Not one sigh, not one look back, not the faintest token of gratitude or regret at leaving those good people who had tended him for a whole year, buttered oat-cake for him, allowed him to choose each night exactly where he would sleep. No, he just marched out beside us, as close as ever he could get, drawing us on in spirit, and not even attending to the scents, until the lodge gates were passed.

It was strictly in accordance with the perversity of things, and something in the nature of calamity that he had not been ours one year, when there came over me a dreadful but overmastering aversion from killing those birds and creatures of which he was so fond as soon as they were dead. And so I never knew him as a sportsman; for dur-

ing that first year he was only an unbroken puppy, tied to my waist for fear of accidents, and carefully pulling me off every shot. They tell me he developed a lovely nose and perfect mouth, large enough to hold gingerly the biggest hare. I well believe it, remembering the qualities of his mother, whose character, however, in stability he far surpassed. But, as *he* grew every year more devoted to dead grouse and birds and rabbits, *I* liked them more and more alive; it was the only real breach between us, and we kept it out of sight. Ah! well; it is consoling to reflect that I should infallibly have ruined his sporting qualities, lacking that peculiar habit of meaning what one says, so necessary to keep dogs virtuous. But surely to have had him with me, quivering and alert, with his solemn, eager face, would have given a new joy to those crisp mornings when the hope of wings coming to the gun makes poignant in the sportsman as nothing else will, an almost sensual love of Nature, a fierce delight in the soft glow of leaves, in the white birch stems and tracery of sparse twigs against blue sky, in the scents of sap and grass and gum and heather flowers; stivers the hair of him with keenness for interpreting each sound, and fills the very fern or moss he kneels on, the very trunk he leans against, with strange vibration.

Slowly Fate prepares for each of us the religion that lies coiled in our most secret nerves; with such we cannot trifle, we do not even try! But how shall a man grudge any one sensations he has so keenly felt? Let such as have never known those curious delights, uphold the hand of horror—for me there can be no such luxury. If I could, I would still perhaps be knowing them; but when once the joy of life in those winged and furry things has knocked at the very portals of one's spirit, the thought that by pressing a little iron twig one will rive that joy out of their vitals, is too hard to bear. Call it æstheticism, squeamishness, namby-pamby sentimentalism, what you will—it is stronger than oneself!

Yes, after one had once watched with an eye that did not merely see, the thirsty gaping of a slowly dying bird, or a rabbit dragging a broken leg to a hole where he would lie for hours thinking of the fern to which he should never more come forth—after that, there was always the following little matter of arithmetic: Given, that all those who had been shooting were "good-fair" shots—which, Heaven knew, they never were—they yet missed one at least in four, and did not miss it very much; so that if seventy-five things were slain, there were also twenty-five that had been

fired at, and, of those twenty-five, twelve and a half had "gotten it" somewhere in their bodies, and would "likely" die at their great leisure.

This was the sum that brought about the only cleavage in our lives; and so, as he grew older, and trying to part from each other we no longer could, he ceased going to Scotland. But after that I often felt, and especially when we heard guns, how the best and most secret instincts of him were being stifled. But what was to be done? In that which was left of a clay pigeon he would take not the faintest interest—the scent of it was paltry. Yet always, even in his most cosseted and idle days, he managed to preserve the grave preoccupation of one professionally concerned with retrieving things that smell; and consoled himself with pastimes such as cricket, which he played in a manner highly specialised, following the ball up the moment it left the bowler's hand, and sometimes retrieving it before it reached the batsman. When remonstrated with, he would consider a little, hanging out a pink tongue and looking rather too eagerly at the ball, then canter slowly out to a sort of forward short leg. Why he always chose that particular position it is difficult to say; possibly he could lurk there better than anywhere else, the batsman's eye not being on him,

and the bowler's not too much. As a fieldsman he was perfect, but for an occasional belief that he was not merely short leg, but slip, point, mid-off, and wicket-keep; and perhaps a tendency to make the ball a little "jubey." But he worked tremendously, watching every movement; for he knew the game thoroughly, and seldom delayed it more than three minutes when he secured the ball. And if that ball were really lost, then indeed he took over the proceedings with an intensity and quiet vigour that destroyed many shrubs, and the solemn satisfaction which comes from being in the very centre of the stage.

But his most passionate delight was swimming in anything except the sea, for which, with its unpleasant noise and habit of tasting salt, he had little affection. I see him now, cleaving the Serpentine, with his air of "the world well lost," striving to reach my stick before it had touched water. Being only a large spaniel, too small for mere heroism, he saved no lives in the water but his own—and that, on one occasion, before our very eyes, from a dark trout stream, which was trying to wash him down into a black hole among the boulders.

The call of the wild—Spring running—whatever it is—that besets men and dogs, seldom attained

full mastery over him; but one could often see it struggling against his devotion to the scent of us, and, watching that dumb contest, I have time and again wondered how far this civilisation of ours was justifiably imposed on him; how far the love for us that we had so carefully implanted could ever replace in him the satisfaction of his primitive wild yearnings. He was like a man, naturally polygamous, married to one loved woman.

It was surely not for nothing that Rover is dog's most common name, and would be ours, but for our too tenacious fear of losing something, to admit, even to ourselves, that we are hankering. There was a man who said: Strange that two such queerly opposite qualities as courage and hypocrisy are the leading characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon! But is not hypocrisy just a product of tenacity, which is again the lower part of courage? Is not hypocrisy but an active sense of property in one's good name, the clutching close of respectability at any price, the feeling that one must not part, even at the cost of truth, with what he has sweated so to gain? And so we Anglo-Saxons will not answer to the name of Rover, and treat our dogs so that they, too, hardly know their natures.

The history of his one wandering, for which no respectable reason can be assigned, will never, of

course, be known. It was in London, of an October evening, when we were told he had slipped out and was not anywhere. Then began those four distressful hours of searching for that black needle in that blacker bundle of hay. Hours of real dismay and suffering—for it is suffering, indeed, to feel a loved thing swallowed up in that hopeless maze of London streets. Stolen or run over? Which was worst? The neighbouring police stations visited, the Dog's Home notified, an order for five hundred "Lost Dog" bills placed in the printer's hands, the streets patrolled! And then, in a lull snatched for food, and still endeavouring to preserve some aspect of assurance, we heard the bark which meant: "Here is a door I cannot open!" We hurried forth, and there he was on the top doorstep—busy, unashamed, giving no explanations, asking for his supper; and very shortly after him came his five hundred "Lost Dog" bills. Long I sat looking at him that night after my companion had gone up, thinking of the evening, some years before, when there followed us that shadow of a spaniel who had been lost for eleven days. And my heart turned over within me. But he! He was asleep, for he knew not remorse.

Ah! and there was that other time, when it was reported to me, returning home at night, that he

had gone out to find me; and I went forth again, disturbed, and whistling his special call to the empty fields. Suddenly out of the darkness I heard a rushing, and he came furiously dashing against my heels from he alone knew where he had been lurking and saying to himself: I will not go in till he comes! I could not scold, there was something too lyrical in the return of that live, lonely, rushing piece of blackness through the blacker night. After all, the vagary was but a variation in his practice when one was away at bed-time, of passionately scratching up his bed in protest, till it resembled nothing; for, in spite of his long and solemn face and the silkiness of his ears, there was much in him yet of the cave bear—he dug graves on the smallest provocations, in which he never buried anything. He was not a "clever" dog; and guiltless of all tricks. Nor was he ever "shown." We did not even dream of subjecting him to this indignity. Was our dog a clown, a hobby, a fad, a fashion, a feather in our caps—that we should subject him to periodic pennings in stuffy halls, that we should harry his faithful soul with such tomfoolery? He never even heard us talk about his lineage, deplore the length of his nose, or call him "clever-looking." We should have been ashamed to let him smell

about us the tar-brush of a sense of property, to let him think we looked on him as an asset to earn us pelf or glory. We wished that there should be between us the spirit that was between the sheep-dog and that farmer, who, when asked his dog's age, touched the old creature's head, and answered thus: "Teresa" (his daughter) "was born in November, and this one in August." That sheep-dog had seen eighteen years when the great white day came for him, and his spirit passed away up, to cling with the wood-smoke round the dark rafters of the kitchen where he had lain so vast a time beside his master's boots. No, no! If a man does not soon pass beyond the thought: "By what shall this dog profit me?" into the large state of simple gladness to be with dog, he shall never know the very essence of that companionship which depends not on the points of dog, but on some strange and subtle mingling of mute spirits. For it is by muteness that a dog becomes for one so utterly beyond value; with him one is at peace, where words play no torturing tricks. When he just sits, loving, and knows that he is being loved, those are the moments that I think are precious to a dog; when, with his adoring soul coming through his eyes, he feels that you are really thinking of him. But he is touchingly

tolerant of one's other occupations. The subject of these memories always knew when one was too absorbed in work to be so close to him as he thought proper; yet he never tried to hinder or distract, or asked for attention. It dinged his mood, of course, so that the red under his eyes and the folds of his crumply cheeks—which seemed to speak of a touch of bloodhound introduced a long way back into his breeding—grew deeper and more manifest. If he could have spoken at such times, he would have said: "I have been a long time alone, and I cannot always be asleep; but you know best, and I must not criticise."

He did not at all mind one's being absorbed in other humans; he seemed to enjoy the sounds of conversation lifting round him, and to know when they were sensible. He could not, for instance, stand actors or actresses giving readings of their parts, perceiving at once that the same had no connection with the minds and real feelings of the speakers; and, having wandered a little to show his disapproval, he would go to the door and stare at it till it opened and let him out. Once or twice, it is true, when an actor of large voice was declaiming an emotional passage, he so far relented as to go up to him and pant in his face. Music, too, made him restless, inclined to sigh, and

to ask questions. Sometimes, at its first sound, he would cross to the window and remain there looking for Her. At others, he would simply go and lie on the loud pedal, and we never could tell whether it was from sentiment, or because he thought that in this way he heard less. At one special Nocturne of Chopin's he always whimpered. He *was*, indeed, of rather Polish temperament—very gay when he was gay, dark and brooding when he was not.

On the whole, perhaps his life was uneventful for so far-travelling a dog, though it held its moments of eccentricity, as when he leaped through the window of a four-wheeler into Kensington, or sat on a Dartmoor adder. But that was fortunately of a Sunday afternoon—when adder and all were torpid, so nothing happened, till a friend, who was following, lifted him off the creature with his large boot.

If only one could have known more of his private life—more of his relations with his own kind! I fancy he was always rather a dark dog to them, having so many thoughts about us that he could not share with any one, and being naturally fastidious, except with ladies, for whom he had a chivalrous and catholic taste, so that they often turned and snapped at him. He had, however,

but one lasting love affair, for a liver-coloured lass of our village, not quite of his own caste, but a wholesome if somewhat elderly girl, with loving and sphinx-like eyes. Their children, alas, were not for this world, and soon departed.

Nor was he a fighting dog; but once attacked, he lacked a sense of values, being unable to distinguish between dogs that he could beat and dogs with whom he had "no earthly." It was, in fact, as well to interfere at once, especially in the matter of retrievers, for he never forgot having in his youth been attacked by a retriever from behind. No, he never forgot, and never forgave, an enemy. Only a month before that day of which I cannot speak, being very old and ill, he engaged an Irish terrier on whose impudence he had long had his eye, and routed him. And how a battle cheered his spirit! He was certainly no Christian; but, allowing for essential dog, he was very much a gentleman. And I do think that most of us who live on this earth these days would rather leave it with that label on us than the other. For to be a Christian, as Tolstoy understood the word—and no one else in our time has had logic and love of truth enough to give it coherent meaning—is (to be quite sincere) not suited to men of Western blood. Whereas—to be a gentleman! It is a far

cry, but perhaps it can be done. In him, at all events, there was no pettiness, no meanness, and no cruelty, and though he fell below his ideal at times, this never altered the true look of his eyes, nor the simple loyalty in his soul.

But what a crowd of memories come back, bringing with them the perfume of fallen days! What delights and glamour, what long hours of effort, discouragements, and secret fears did he not watch over—our black familiar; and with the sight and scent and touch of him, deepen or assuage! How many thousand walks did we not go together, so that we still turn to see if he is following at his padding gait, attentive to the invisible trails. Not the least hard thing to bear when they go from us, these quiet friends, is that they carry away with them so many years of our own lives. Yet, if they find warmth therein, who would grudge them those years that they have so guarded? Nothing else of us can they take to lie upon with outstretched paws and chin pressed to the ground; and, whatever they take, be sure they have deserved.

Do they know, as we do, that their time must come? Yes, they know, at rare moments. No other way can I interpret those pauses of his latter life, when, propped on his forefeet, he would sit for

long minutes quite motionless—his head drooped, utterly withdrawn; then turn those eyes of his and look at me. That look said more plainly than all words could: "Yes, I know that I must go!" If *we* have spirits that persist—*they* have. If *we* know after our departure, who we were—*they* do. No one, I think, who really longs for truth, can ever glibly say which it will be for dog and man—persistence or extinction of our consciousness. There is but one thing certain—the childishness of fretting over that eternal question. Whichever it be, it must be right, the only possible thing. He felt that too, I know; but then, like his master, he was what is called a pessimist.

My companion tells me that, since he left us, he has once come back. It was Old Year's Night, and she was sad, when he came to her in visible shape of his black body, passing round the dining-table from the window-end, to his proper place beneath the table, at her feet. She saw him quite clearly; she heard the padding tap-tap of his paws and very toe-nails; she felt his warmth brushing hard against the front of her skirt. She thought then that he would settle down upon her feet, but something disturbed him, and he stood pausing, pressed against her, then moved out toward where I generally sit, but was not sitting that night.

She saw him stand there, as if considering; then at some sound or laugh, she became self-conscious, and slowly, very slowly, he was no longer there. Had he some message, some counsel to give, something he would say, that last night of the last year of all those he had watched over us? Will he come back again?

No stone stands over where he lies. It is on our hearts that his life is engraved.

1912.

FELICITY

WHEN God is so good to the fields, of what use are words—those poor husks of sentiment! There is no painting Felicity on the wing! No way of bringing on to the canvas the flying glory of things! A single buttercup of the twenty million in one field is worth all these dry symbols —that can never body forth the very spirit of that froth of May breaking over the hedges, the choir of birds and bees, the lost-travelling down of the wind-flowers, the white-throated swallows in their Odysseys. Just here there are no skylarks, but what joy of song and leaf; of lanes lighted with bright trees, the few oaks still golden brown, and the ashes still spiritual! Only the blackbirds and thrushes can sing-up this day, and cuckoos over the hill. The year has flown so fast that the apple-trees have dropped nearly all their bloom, and in "long meadow" the "daggers" are out early, beside the narrow bright streams. Orpheus sits there on a stone, when nobody is by, and pipes to the ponies; and Pan can often be seen dancing with his nymphs in the raised beech-grove

where it is always twilight, if you lie still enough against the far bank.

Who can believe in growing old, so long as we are wrapped in this cloak of colour and wings and song; so long as this unimaginable vision is here for us to gaze at—the soft-faced sheep about us, and the wool-bags drying out along the fence, and great numbers of tiny ducks, so trustful that the crows have taken several.

Blue is the colour of youth, and all the blue flowers have a "fey" look. Everything seems young—too young to work. There is but one thing busy, a starling, fetching grubs for its little family, above my head—it must take that flight at least two hundred times a day. The children should be very fat.

When the sky is so happy, and the flowers so luminous, it does not seem possible that the bright angels of this day shall pass into dark night, that slowly these wings shall close, and the cuckoo praise himself to sleep, mad midges dance-in the evening; the grass shiver with dew, wind die, and no bird sing. . . .

Yet so it is. Day has gone—the song and glamour and swoop of wings. Slowly has passed the daily miracle. It is night. But Felicity has not withdrawn; she has but changed her robe for

silence, velvet, and the pearl fan of the moon. Everything is sleeping, save only a single star, and the pansies. Why they should be more wakeful than the other flowers, I do not know. The expressions of their faces, if one bends down into the dusk, are sweeter and more cunning than ever. They have some compact, no doubt, in hand.

What a number of voices have given up the ghost to this night of but one voice—the murmur of the stream out there in darkness!

With what religion all has been done! Not one buttercup open; the yew-trees already with shadows flung down! No moths are abroad yet; it is too early in the year for nightjars; and the owls are quiet. But who shall say that in this silence, in this hovering wan light, in this air bereft of wings, and of all scent save freshness, there is less of the ineffable, less of that before which words are dumb?

It is strange how this tranquillity of night, that seems so final, is inhabited, if one keeps still enough. A lamb is bleating out there on the dim moor; a bird somewhere, a little one, about three fields away, makes the sweetest kind of chirruping; some cows are still cropping. There is a scent, too, underneath the freshness—sweet-brier, I think, and our Dutch honeysuckle; nothing else

could so delicately twine itself with air. And even in this darkness the roses have colour, more beautiful perhaps than ever. If colour be, as they say, but the effect of light on various fibre, one may think of it as a tune, the song of thanksgiving that each form puts forth, to sun and moon and stars and fire. These moon-coloured roses are singing a most quiet song. I see all of a sudden that there are many more stars beside that one so red and watchful. The flown kite is there with its seven pale worlds; it has adventured very high and far to-night—with a company of others remoter still.

This serenity of night! What could seem less likely ever more to move, and change again to day? Surely now the world has found its long sleep; and the pearly glimmer from the moon will last, and the precious silence never again yield to clamour; the grape-bloom of this mystery never more pale out into gold. . . .

And yet it is not so. The nightly miracle has passed. It is dawn. Faint light has come. I am waiting for the first sound. The sky as yet is like nothing but grey paper, with the shadows of wild geese passing. The trees are phantoms. And then it comes—that first call of a bird, startled at discovering day! Just one call—and

now, here, there, on all the trees, the sudden answers swelling, of that most sweet and careless choir. Was irresponsibility ever so divine as this, of birds waking? Then—saffron into the sky, and once more silence! What is it birds do after the first Chorale? Think of their sins and business? Or just sleep again? The trees are fast dropping unreality, and the cuckoos begin calling. Colour is burning up in the flowers already; the dew smells of them.

The miracle is ended, for the starling has begun its job; and the sun is fretting those dark, busy wings with gold. Full day has come again. But the face of it is a little strange, it is not like yesterday. Queer—to think, no day is like to a day that's past and no night like a night that's coming! Why, then, fear death, which is but night? Why care, if next day have different face and spirit?

The sun has lighted buttercup-field now, the wind touches the lime-tree. Something passes over me away up there.

It is Felicity on her wings!

1912.

CONCERNING LETTERS

A NOVELIST'S ALLEGORY

ONCE upon a time the Prince of Felicitas had occasion to set forth on a journey. It was a late autumn evening with few pale stars and a moon no larger than the paring of a finger-nail. And as he rode through the purlieus of his city, the white mane of his amber-coloured steed was all that he could clearly see in the dusk of the high streets. His way led through a quarter but little known to him, and he was surprised to find that his horse, instead of ambling forward with his customary gentle vigour, stepped carefully from side to side, stopping now and then to curve his neck and prick his ears—as though at some thing of fear unseen in the darkness; while on either hand creatures could be heard rustling and scuttling, and little cold draughts as of wings fanned the rider's cheeks.

The Prince at last turned in his saddle, but so great was the darkness that he could not even see his escort.

"What is the name of this street?" he said.

"Sire, it is called the Vita Publica."

"It is very dark." Even as he spoke his horse staggered, but, recovering its foothold with an effort, stood trembling violently. Nor could all the incitements of its master induce the beast again to move forward.

"Is there no one with a lanthorn in this street?" asked the Prince.

His attendants began forthwith to call out loudly for any one who had a lanthorn. Now, it chanced that an old man sleeping in a hovel on a pallet of straw was awakened by these cries. When he heard that it was the Prince of Felicitas himself, he came hastily, carrying his lanthorn, and stood trembling beside the Prince's horse. It was so dark that the Prince could not see him.

"Light your lanthorn, old man," he said.

The old man laboriously lit his lanthorn. Its pale rays fled out on either hand; beautiful but grim was the vision they disclosed. Tall houses, fair court-yards, and a palm-grown garden; in front of the Prince's horse a deep cesspool, on whose jagged edges the good beast's hoofs were planted; and, as far as the glimmer of the lanthorn stretched, both ways down the rutted street, paving stones displaced, and smooth tesselated marble; pools of mud, the hanging fruit of an orange-tree, and dark, scurrying shapes of monstrous rats

bolting across from house to house. The old man held the lanthorn higher; and instantly bats flying against it would have beaten out the light but for the thin protection of its horn sides.

The Prince sat still upon his horse, looking first at the rutted space that he had traversed and then at the rutted space before him.

"Without a light," he said, "this thoroughfare is dangerous. What is your name, old man?"

"My name is Cethru," replied the aged churl.

"Cethru!" said the Prince. "Let it be your duty henceforth to walk with your lanthorn up and down this street all night and every night," —and he looked at Cethru: "Do you understand, old man, what it is you have to do?"

The old man answered in a voice that trembled like a rusty flute:

"Aye, aye!—to walk up and down and hold my lanthorn so that folk can see where they be goin'."

The Prince gathered up his reins; but the old man, lurching forward, touched his stirrup.

"How long be I to go on wi' thiccy job?"

"Until you die!"

Cethru held up his lanthorn, and they could see his long, thin face, like a sandwich of dried leather, jerk and quiver, and his thin grey hairs flutter in

the draught of the bats' wings circling round the light.

"'Twill be main hard!" he groaned; "an' my lanthorn's nowt but a poor thing."

With a high look, the Prince of Felicitas bent and touched the old man's forehead.

"Until you die, old man," he repeated; and bidding his followers to light torches from Cethru's lanthorn, he rode on down the twisting street. The clatter of the horses' hoofs died out in the night, and the scuttling and the rustling of the rats and the whispers of the bats' wings were heard again.

Cethru, left alone in the dark thoroughfare, sighed heavily; then, spitting on his hands, he tightened the old girdle round his loins, and slinging the lanthorn on his staff, held it up to the level of his waist, and began to make his way along the street. His progress was but slow, for he had many times to stop and rekindle the flame within his lanthorn, which the bats' wings, his own stumbles, and the jostlings of footpads or of revellers returning home, were for ever extinguishing. In traversing that long street he spent half the night, and half the night in traversing it back again. The saffron swan of dawn, slow swimming up the sky-river between the high roof-banks, bent her

neck down through the dark air-water to look at him staggering below her, with his still smoking wick. No sooner did Cethru see that sunlit bird, than with a great sigh of joy he sat him down, and at once fell asleep.

Now when the dwellers in the houses of the Vita Publica first gained knowledge that this old man passed every night with his lanthorn up and down their street, and when they marked those pallid gleams gliding over the motley prospect of cess-pools and garden gates, over the sightless hovels and the rich-carved frontages of their palaces; or saw them stay their journey and remain suspended like a handful of daffodils held up against the black stuffs of secrecy—they said:

"It is good that the old man should pass like this—we shall see better where we're going; and if the Watch have any job on hand, or want to put the pavements in order, his lanthorn will serve their purpose well enough." And they would call out of their doors and windows to him passing:

"Hola! old man Cethru! All's well with our house, and with the street before it?"

But, for answer, the old man only held his lanthorn up, so that in the ring of its pale light they saw some sight or other in the street. And his

silence troubled them, one by one, for each had expected that he would reply:

"Aye, aye! All's well with *your* house, Sirs, and with the street before it!"

Thus they grew irritated with this old man who did not seem able to do anything but just hold his lanthorn up. And gradually they began to dislike his passing by their doors with his pale light, by which they could not fail to see, not only the rich-carved frontages and scrolled gates of courtyards and fair gardens, but things that were not pleasing to the eye. And they murmured amongst themselves: "What is the good of this old man and his silly lanthorn? We can see all we want to see without him; in fact, we got on very well before he came."

So, as he passed, rich folk who were supping would pelt him with orange-peel and empty the dregs of their wine over his head; and poor folk, sleeping in their hutches, turned over, as the rays of the lanthorn fell on them, and cursed him for that disturbance. Nor did revellers or footpads treat the old man civilly, but tied him to the wall, where he was constrained to stay till a kind passer-by released him. And ever the bats darkened his lanthorn with their wings and tried to beat the flame out. And the old man thought: "This be a

terrible hard job; I don't seem to please nobody." But because the Prince of Felicitas had so commanded him, he continued nightly to pass with his lanthorn up and down the street; and every morning as the saffron swan came swimming overhead, to fall asleep. But his sleep did not last long, for he was compelled to pass many hours each day in gathering rushes and melting down tallow for his lanthorn; so that his lean face grew more than ever like a sandwich of dried leather.

Now it came to pass that the Town Watch having had certain complaints made to them that persons had been bitten in the Vita Publica by rats, doubted of their duty to destroy these ferocious creatures; and they held investigation, summoning the persons bitten and inquiring of them how it was that in so dark a street they could tell that the animals which had bitten them were indeed rats. Howbeit for some time no one could be found who could say more than what he had been told, and since this was not evidence, the Town Watch had good hopes that they would not after all be forced to undertake this tedious enterprise. But presently there came before them one who said that he had himself seen the rat which had bitten him, by the light of an old man's lanthorn. When the Town Watch heard this they were vexed,

for they knew that if this were true they would now be forced to prosecute the arduous undertaking, and they said:

"Bring in this old man!"

Cethru was brought before them trembling.

"What is this we hear, old man, about your lanthorn and the rat? And in the first place, what were you doing in the Vita Publica at that time of night?"

Cethru answered: "I were just passin' with my lanthorn!"

"Tell us—did *you* see the rat?"

Cethru shook his head: "My lanthorn seed the rat, maybe!" he muttered.

"Old owl!" said the Captain of the Watch: "Be careful what you say! If you saw the rat, why did you then not aid this unhappy citizen who was bitten by it—first, to avoid that rodent, and subsequently to slay it, thereby relieving the public of a pestilential danger?"

Cethru looked at him, and for some seconds did not reply; then he said slowly: "I were just passin' with my lanthorn."

"That you have already told us," said the Captain of the Watch; "it is no answer."

Cethru's leathern cheeks became wine-coloured, so desirous was he to speak, and so unable. And

the Watch sneered and laughed, saying: "This is a fine witness."

But of a sudden Cethru spoke:

"What would I be duin'—killin' rats; tidden my business to kill rats."

The Captain of the Watch caressed his beard, and looking at the old man with contempt, said:

"It seems to me, brothers, that this is an idle old vagabond, who does no good to any one. We should be well advised, I think, to prosecute him for vagrancy. But that is not at this moment the matter in hand. Owing to the accident—scarcely fortunate—of this old man's passing with his lanthorn, it would certainly appear that citizens have been bitten by rodents. It is then, I fear, our duty to institute proceedings against those poisonous and violent animals."

And amidst the sighing of the Watch, it was so resolved.

Cethru was glad to shuffle away, unnoticed, from the Court, and sitting down under a camel-date tree outside the City Wall, he thus reflected:

"They were rough with me! I done nothin', so far's I can see!"

And a long time he sat there with the bunches of the camel-dates above him, golden as the sunlight. Then, as the scent of the lyrio flowers, re-

leased by evening, warned him of the night dropping like a flight of dark birds on the plain, he rose stiffly, and made his way as usual toward the Vita Publica.

He had traversed but little of that black thoroughfare, holding his lanthorn at the level of his breast, when the sound of a splash and cries for help smote his long, thin ears. Remembering how the Captain of the Watch had admonished him, he stopped and peered about, but owing to his proximity to the light of his own lanthorn he saw nothing. Presently he heard another splash and the sound of blowings and of puffings, but still unable to see clearly whence they came, he was forced in bewilderment to resume his march. But he had no sooner entered the next bend of that obscure and winding avenue than the most lamentable, lusty cries assailed him. Again he stood still, blinded by his own light. Somewhere at hand a citizen was being beaten, for vague, quick-moving forms emerged into the radiance of his lanthorn out of the deep violet of the night air. The cries swelled, and died away, and swelled; and the mazed Cethru moved forward on his way. But very near the end of his first traversage, the sound of a long, deep sighing, as of a fat man in spiritual pain, once more arrested him.

"Drat me!" he thought, "this time I *will* see what 'tis," and he spun round and round, holding his lanthorn now high, now low, and to both sides. "The devil an' all's in it to-night," he murmured to himself; "there's some 'at here fetchin' of its breath awful loud." But for his life he could see nothing, only that the higher he held his lanthorn the more painful grew the sound of the fat but spiritual sighing. And desperately, he at last resumed his progress.

On the morrow, while he still slept stretched on his straw pallet, there came to him a member of the Watch.

"Old man, you are wanted at the Court House; rouse up, and bring your lanthorn."

Stiffly Cethru rose.

"What be they wantin' me fur now, mester?"

"Ah!" replied the Watchman, "they are about to see if they can't put an end to your goings-on."

Cethru shivered, and was silent.

Now when they reached the Court House it was patent that a great affair was forward; for the Judges were in their robes, and a crowd of advocates, burgesses, and common folk thronged the carven, lofty hall of justice.

When Cethru saw that all eyes were turned on him, he shivered still more violently, fixing his

fascinated gaze on the three Judges in their emerald robes.

"This then is the prisoner," said the oldest of the Judges; "proceed with the indictment!"

A little advocate in snuff-coloured clothes rose on little legs, and commenced to read:

"Forasmuch as on the seventeenth night of August fifteen hundred years since the Messiah's death, one Celestine, a maiden of this city, fell into a cesspool in the Vita Publica, and while being quietly drowned, was espied of the burgess Pardonix by the light of a lanthorn held by the old man Cethru; and, forasmuch as, plunging in, the said Pardonix rescued her, not without grave risk of life and the ruin of his clothes, and to-day lies ill of fever; and forasmuch as the old man Cethru was the cause of these misfortunes to the burgess Pardonix, by reason of his wandering lanthorn's showing the drowning maiden, the Watch do hereby indict, accuse, and otherwise place charge upon this Cethru of 'Vagabondage without serious occupation.'

"And, forasmuch as on this same night the Watchman Filepo, made aware, by the light of this said Cethru's lanthorn, of three sturdy footpads, went to arrest them, and was set on by the rogues and wellnigh slain, the Watch do hereby

indict, accuse, and otherwise charge upon Cethru complicity in this assault, by reasons, namely, first, that he discovered the footpads to the Watchman and the Watchman to the footpads by the light of his lanthorn; and, second, that, having thus discovered them, he stood idly by and gave no assistance to the law.

"And, forasmuch as on this same night the wealthy burgess Pranzo, who, having prepared a banquet, was standing in his doorway awaiting the arrival of his guests, did see, by the light of the said Cethru's lanthorn, a beggar woman and her children grovelling in the gutter for garbage, whereby his appetite was lost completely; and, forasmuch as he, Pranzo, has lodged a complaint against the Constitution for permitting women and children to go starved, the Watch do hereby indict, accuse, and otherwise make charge on Cethru of rebellion and of anarchy, in that wilfully he doth disturb good citizens by showing to them without provocation disagreeable sights, and doth moreover endanger the laws by causing persons to desire to change them.

"These be the charges, reverend Judges, so please you!"

And having thus spoken, the little advocate resumed his seat.

Then said the oldest of the Judges:

"Cethru, you have heard; what answer do you make?"

But no word, only the chattering of teeth, came from Cethru.

"Have you no defence?" said the Judge: "these are grave accusations!"

Then Cethru spoke.

"So please your Highnesses," he said, "can I help what my lanthorn sees?"

And having spoken these words, to all further questions he remained more silent than a headless man.

The Judges took counsel of each other, and the oldest of them thus addressed himself to Cethru:

"If you have no defence, old man, and there is no one will say a word for you, we can but proceed to judgment."

Then in the main aisle of the Court there rose a youthful advocate.

"Most reverend Judges," he said in a mellifluous voice, clearer than the fluting of a bell-bird, "it is useless to look for words from this old man, for it is manifest that he himself is nothing, and that his lanthorn is alone concerned in this affair. But, reverend Judges, bethink you well: Would you have a lanthorn ply a trade or be concerned

with a profession, or do aught indeed but pervade the streets at night, shedding its light, which, if you will, is vagabondage? And, Sirs, upon the second count of this indictment: Would you have a lanthorn dive into cesspools to rescue maidens? Would you have a lanthorn to beat footpads? Or, indeed, to be any sort of partisan either of the Law or of them that break the Law? Sure, Sirs, I think not. And as to this third charge of fostering anarchy—let me but describe the trick of this lanthorn's flame. It is distilled, most reverend Judges, of oil and wick, together with that sweet secret heat of whose birth no words of mine can tell. And when, Sirs, this pale flame has sprung into the air swaying to every wind, it brings vision to the human eye. And, if it be charged on this old man Cethru that he and his lanthorn by reason of their showing not only the good but the evil bring no pleasure into the world, I ask, Sirs, what in the world is so dear as this power to see—whether it be the beautiful or the foul that is disclosed? Need I, indeed, tell you of the way this flame spreads its feelers, and delicately darts and hovers in the darkness, conjuring things from nothing? This mechanical summoning, Sirs, of visions out of blackness is benign, by no means of malevolent intent; no more than if a man, pass-

ing two donkeys in the road, one lean and the other fat, could justly be arraigned for malignancy because they were not both fat. This, reverend Judges, is the essence of the matter concerning the rich burgess, Pranzo, who, on account of the sight he saw by Cethru's lanthorn, has lost the equilibrium of his stomach. For, Sirs, the lanthorn did but show that which was there, both fair and foul, no more, no less; and though it is indeed true that Pranzo is upset, it was not because the lanthorn maliciously produced distorted images, but merely caused to be seen, in due proportions, things which Pranzo had not seen before. And surely, reverend Judges, being just men, you would not have this lanthorn turn its light away from what is ragged and ugly because there are also fair things on which its light may fall; how, indeed, being a lanthorn, could it, if it would? And I would have you note this, Sirs, that by this impartial discovery of the proportions of one thing to another, this lanthorn must indeed perpetually seem to cloud and sadden those things which are fair, because of the deep instincts of harmony and justice planted in the human breast. However unfair and cruel, then, this lanthorn may seem to those who, deficient in these instincts, desire all their

lives to see naught but what is pleasant, lest they, like Pranzo, should lose their appetites—it is not consonant with equity that this lanthorn should, even if it could, be prevented from thus mechanically buffeting the holiday cheek of life. I would think, Sirs, that you should rather blame the queazy state of Pranzo's stomach. The old man has said that he cannot help what his lanthorn sees. This is a just saying. But if, reverend Judges, you deem this equipoised, indifferent lanthorn to be indeed blameworthy for having shown in the same moment, side by side, the skull and the fair face, the burdock and the tiger-lily, the butterfly and toad, then, most reverend Judges, punish it, but do not punish this old man, for he himself is but a flume of smoke, thistle down dispersed—nothing!"

So saying, the young advocate ceased.

Again the three Judges took counsel of each other, and after much talk had passed between them, the oldest spoke:

"What this young advocate has said seems to us to be the truth. We cannot punish a lanthorn. Let the old man go!"

And Cethru went out into the sunshine. . . .

Now it came to pass that the Prince of Felicitas, returning from his journey, rode once more

on his amber-coloured steed down the Vita Publica.

The night was dark as a rook's wing, but far away down the street burned a little light, like a red star truant from heaven. The Prince riding by descried it for a lanthorn, with an old man sleeping beside it.

"How is this, Friend?" said the Prince. "You are not walking as I bade you, carrying your lanthorn."

But Cethru neither moved nor answered.

"Lift him up!" said the Prince.

They lifted up his head and held the lanthorn to his closed eyes. So lean was that brown face that the beams from the lanthorn would not rest on it, but slipped past on either side into the night. His eyes did not open. He was dead.

And the Prince touched him, saying: "Farewell, old man! The lanthorn is still alight. Go, fetch me another one, and let him carry it!" . . .

1909.

SOME PLATITUDES CONCERNING DRAMA

A DRAMA must be shaped so as to have a spire of meaning. Every grouping of life and character has its inherent moral; and the business of the dramatist is so to pose the group as to bring that moral poignantly to the light of day. Such is the moral that exhales from plays like *Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. But such is not the moral to be found in the great bulk of contemporary Drama. The moral of the average play is now, and probably has always been, the triumph at all costs of a supposed immediate ethical good over a supposed immediate ethical evil.

The vice of drawing these distorted morals has permeated the Drama to its spine; discoloured its art, humanity, and significance; infected its creators, actors, audience, critics; too often turned it from a picture into a caricature. A Drama which lives under the shadow of the distorted moral forgets how to be free, fair, and fine—forgets so completely that it often prides itself on having forgotten.

Now, in writing plays, there are, in this matter

of the moral, three courses open to the serious dramatist. The first is: To definitely set before the public that which it wishes to have set before it, the views and codes of life by which the public lives and in which it believes. This way is the most common, successful, and popular. It makes the dramatist's position sure, and not too obviously authoritative.

The second course is: To definitely set before the public those views and codes of life by which the dramatist himself lives, those theories in which he himself believes, the more effectively if they are the opposite of what the public wishes to have placed before it, presenting them so that the audience may swallow them like powder in a spoonful of jam.

There is a third course: To set before the public no cut-and-dried codes, but the phenomena of life and character, selected and combined, *but not distorted*, by the dramatist's outlook, set down without fear, favour, or prejudice, leaving the public to draw such poor moral as nature may afford. This third method requires a certain detachment; it requires a sympathy with, a love of, and a curiosity as to, things for their own sake; it requires a far view, together with patient industry, for no immediately practical result.

It was once said of Shakespeare that he had never done any good to any one, and never would. This, unfortunately, could not, in the sense in which the word "good" was then meant, be said of most modern dramatists. In truth, the good that Shakespeare did to humanity was of a remote, and, shall we say, eternal nature; something of the good that men get from having the sky and the sea to look at. And this partly because he was, in his greater plays at all events, free from the habit of drawing a distorted moral. Now, the playwright who supplies to the public the facts of life distorted by the moral which it expects, does so that he may do the public what he considers an immediate good, by fortifying its prejudices; and the dramatist who supplies to the public facts distorted by his own advanced morality, does so because he considers that he will at once benefit the public by substituting for its worn-out ethics, his own. In both cases the advantage the dramatist hopes to confer on the public is immediate and practical.

But matters change, and morals change; men remain—and to set men, and the facts about them, down faithfully, so that they draw for us the moral of their natural actions, may also possibly be of benefit to the community. It is, at all events,

harder than to set men and facts down, as they ought, or ought not to be. This, however, is not to say that a dramatist should, or indeed can, keep himself and his temperamental philosophy out of his work. As a man lives and thinks, so will he write. But it is certain, that to the making of good drama, as to the practice of every other art, there must be brought an almost passionate love of discipline, a white-heat of self-respect, a desire to make the truest, fairest, best thing in one's power; and that to these must be added an eye that does not flinch. Such qualities alone will bring to a drama the selfless character which soaks it with inevitability.

The word "pessimist" is frequently applied to the few dramatists who have been content to work in this way. It has been applied, among others, to Euripides, to Shakespeare, to Ibsen; it will be applied to many in the future. Nothing, however, is more dubious than the way in which these two words "pessimist" and "optimist" are used; for the optimist appears to be he who cannot bear the world as it is, and is forced by his nature to picture it as it ought to be, and the pessimist one who cannot only bear the world as it is, but loves it well enough to draw it faithfully. The true lover of the human race is surely he who

can put up with it in all its forms, in vice as well as in virtue, in defeat no less than in victory; the true seer he who sees not only joy but sorrow, the true painter of human life one who blinks nothing. It may be that he is also, incidentally, its true benefactor.

In the whole range of the social fabric there are only two impartial persons, the scientist and the artist, and under the latter heading such dramatists as desire to write not only for to-day, but for to-morrow, must strive to come.

But dramatists being as they are made—past remedy—it is perhaps more profitable to examine the various points at which their qualities and defects are shown.

The plot! A good plot is that sure edifice which slowly rises out of the interplay of circumstance on temperament, and temperament on circumstance, within the enclosing atmosphere of an idea. A human being is the best plot there is; it may be impossible to see why he is a good plot, because the idea within which he was brought forth cannot be fully grasped; but it is plain that *he is a good plot.* He is organic. And so it must be with a good play. Reason alone produces no good plots; they come by original sin, sure conception, and instinctive after-power of selecting what benefits

the germ. A bad plot, on the other hand, is simply a row of stakes, with a character impaled on each—characters who would have liked to live, but came to untimely grief; who started bravely, but fell on these stakes, placed beforehand in a row, and were transfixed one by one, while their ghosts stride on, squeaking and gibbering, through the play. Whether these stakes are made of facts or of ideas, according to the nature of the dramatist who planted them, their effect on the unfortunate characters is the same; the creatures were begotten to be staked, and staked they are! The demand for a good plot, not unfrequently heard, commonly signifies: "Tickle my sensations by stuffing the play with arbitrary adventures, so that I need not be troubled to take the characters seriously. Set the persons of the play to action, regardless of time, sequence, atmosphere, and probability!"

Now, true dramatic action is what characters do, at once contrary, as it were, to expectation, and yet because they have already done other things. No dramatist should let his audience know what is coming; but neither should he suffer his characters to act without making his audience feel that those actions are in harmony with temperament, and arise from previous known actions, together with the temperaments and previous known

actions of the other characters in the play. The dramatist who hangs his characters to his plot, instead of hanging his plot to his characters, is guilty of cardinal sin.

The dialogue! Good dialogue again is character, marshalled so as continually to stimulate interest or excitement. The reason good dialogue is seldom found in plays is merely that it is hard to write, for it requires not only a knowledge of what interests or excites, but such a feeling for character as brings misery to the dramatist's heart when his creations speak as they should not speak—ashes to his mouth when they say things for the sake of saying them—disgust when they are "smart."

The art of writing true dramatic dialogue is an austere art, denying itself all license, grudging every sentence devoted to the mere machinery of the play, suppressing all jokes and epigrams severed from character, relying for fun and pathos on the fun and tears of life. From start to finish good dialogue is hand-made, like good lace; clear, of fine texture, furthering with each thread the harmony and strength of a design to which all must be subordinated.

But good dialogue is also spiritual action. In so far as the dramatist divorces his dialogue from spiritual action—that is to say, from progress of

events, or toward events which are significant of character—he is stultifying τὸ δράμα the thing done; he may make pleasing disquisitions, he is not making drama. And in so far as he twists character to suit his moral or his plot, he is neglecting a first principle, that truth to Nature which alone invests art with hand-made quality.

The dramatist's license, in fact, ends with his design. In conception alone he is free. He may take what character or group of characters he chooses, see them with what eyes, knit them with what idea, within the limits of his temperament; but once taken, seen, and knitted, he is bound to treat them like a gentleman, with the tenderest consideration of their mainsprings. Take care of character; action and dialogue will take care of themselves! The true dramatist gives full rein to his temperament in the scope and nature of his subject; having once selected subject and characters, he is just, gentle, restrained, neither gratifying his lust for praise at the expense of his offspring, nor using them as puppets to flout his audience. Being himself the nature that brought them forth, he guides them in the course predestined at their conception. So only have they a chance of defying Time, which is always lying in wait to destroy the false, topical, or fashionable,

all—in a word—that is not based on the permanent elements of human nature. The perfect dramatist rounds up his characters and facts within the ring-fence of a dominant idea which fulfils the craving of his spirit; having got them there, he suffers them to live their own lives.

Plot, action, character, dialogue! But there is yet another subject for a platitude. Flavour! An impalpable quality, less easily captured than the scent of a flower, the peculiar and most essential attribute of any work of art! It is the thin, poignant spirit which hovers up out of a play, and is as much its differentiating essence as is caffeine of coffee. Flavour, in fine, is the spirit of the dramatist projected into his work in a state of volatility, so that no one can exactly lay hands on it, here, there, or anywhere. This distinctive essence of a play, marking its brand, is the one thing at which the dramatist cannot work, for it is outside his consciousness. A man may have many moods, he has but one spirit; and this spirit he communicates in some subtle, unconscious way to all his work. It waxes and wanes with the currents of his vitality, but no more alters than a chestnut changes into an oak.

For, in truth, dramas are very like unto trees, springing from seedlings, shaping themselves inevitably in accordance with the laws fast hidden

within themselves, drinking sustenance from the earth and air, and in conflict with the natural forces round them. So they slowly come to full growth, until warped, stunted, or risen to fair and gracious height, they stand open to all the winds. And the trees that spring from each dramatist are of different race; he is the spirit of his own sacred grove, into which no stray tree can by any chance enter.

One more platitude. It is not unfashionable to pit one form of drama against another—holding up the naturalistic to the disadvantage of the epic; the epic to the belittlement of the fantastic; the fantastic to the detriment of the naturalistic. Little purpose is thus served. The essential meaning, truth, beauty, and irony of things may be revealed under all these forms. Vision over life and human nature can be as keen and just, the revelation as true, inspiring, delight-giving, and thought-provoking, whatever fashion be employed—it is simply a question of doing it well enough to uncover the kernel of the nut. Whether the violet come from Russia, from Parma, or from England, matters little. Close by the Greek temples at Pæstum there are violets that seem redder, and sweeter, than any ever seen—as though they have sprung up out of the footprints of some old pagan goddess; but under the April

sun, in a Devonshire lane, the little blue scentless violets capture every bit as much of the spring. And so it is with drama—no matter what its form —it need only be the "real thing," need only have caught some of the precious fluids, revelation, or delight, and imprisoned them within a chalice to which we may put our lips and continually drink.

And yet, starting from this last platitude, one may perhaps be suffered to speculate as to the particular forms that our renascent drama is likely to assume. For our drama is renascent, and nothing will stop its growth. It is not renascent because this or that man is writing, but because of a new spirit. A spirit that is no doubt in part the gradual outcome of the impact on our home-grown art, of Russian, French, and Scandinavian influences, but which in the main rises from an awakened humanity in the conscience of our time.

What, then, are to be the main channels down which the renascent English drama will float in the coming years? It is more than possible that these main channels will come to be two in number and situate far apart.

The one will be the broad and clear-cut channel of naturalism, down which will course a drama poignantly shaped, and inspired with high intention, but faithful to the seething and multiple life

around us, drama such as some are inclined to term photographic, deceived by a seeming simplicity into forgetfulness of the old proverb, "Ars est celare artem," and oblivious of the fact that, to be vital, to grip, such drama is in every respect as dependent on imagination, construction, selection, and elimination—the main laws of artistry—as ever was the romantic or rhapsodic play. The question of naturalistic technique will bear, indeed, much more study than has yet been given to it. The aim of the dramatist employing it is obviously to create such an illusion of actual life passing on the stage as to compel the spectator to pass through an experience of his own, to think, and talk, and move with the people he sees thinking, talking, and moving in front of him. A false phrase, a single word out of tune or time, will destroy that illusion and spoil the surface as surely as a stone heaved into a still pool shatters the image seen there. But this is only the beginning of the reason why the naturalistic is the most exacting and difficult of all techniques. It is easy enough to *reproduce* the exact conversation and movements of persons in a room; it is desperately hard to *produce* the perfectly natural conversation and movements of those persons, when each natural phrase spoken and each natural movement made

has not only to contribute toward the growth and perfection of a drama's soul, but also to be a revelation, phrase by phrase, movement by movement, of essential traits of character. To put it another way, naturalistic art, when alive, indeed to be alive at all, is simply the art of manipulating a procession of most delicate symbols. Its service is the swaying and focussing of men's feelings and thoughts in the various departments of human life. It will be like a steady lamp, held up from time to time, in whose light things will be seen for a space clearly and in due proportion, freed from the mists of prejudice and partisanship.

And the other of these two main channels will, I think, be a twisting and delicious stream, which will bear on its breast new barques of poetry, shaped, it may be, like prose, but a prose incarnating through its fantasy and symbolism all the deeper aspirations, yearning, doubts, and mysterious stirrings of the human spirit; a poetic prose-drama, emotionalising us by its diversity and purity of form and invention, and whose province will be to disclose the elemental soul of man and the forces of Nature, not perhaps as the old tragedies disclosed them, not necessarily in the epic mood, but always with beauty and in the spirit of discovery.

Such will, I think, be the two vital forms of our drama in the coming generation. And between these two forms there must be no crude unions; they are too far apart, the cross is too violent. For, where there is a seeming blend of lyricism and naturalism, it will on examination be found, I think, to exist only in plays whose subjects or settings—as in Synge's "Playboy of the Western World," or in Mr. Masefield's "Nan"—are so removed from our ken that we cannot really tell, and therefore do not care, whether an absolute illusion is maintained. The poetry which may and should exist in naturalistic drama, can only be that of perfect rightness of proportion, rhythm, shape—the poetry, in fact, that lies in all vital things. It is the ill-mating of forms that has killed a thousand plays. We want no more bastard drama; no more attempts to dress out the simple dignity of everyday life in the peacock's feathers of false lyricism; no more straw-stuffed heroes or heroines; no more rabbits and goldfish from the conjurer's pockets, nor any limelight. Let us have starlight, moonlight, sunlight, and the light of our own self-respects.

1909.

MEDITATION ON FINALITY

IN the Grand Canyon of Arizona, that most exhilarating of all natural phenomena, Nature has for once so focussed her effects, that the result is a framed and final work of Art. For there, between two high lines of plateau, level as the sea, are sunk the wrought thrones of the innumerable gods, couchant, and for ever revering, in their million moods of light and colour, the Master Mystery.

Having seen this culmination, I realize why many people either recoil before it, and take the first train home, or speak of it as a "remarkable formation." For, though mankind at large craves finality, it does not crave the sort that bends the knee to Mystery. In Nature, in Religion, in Art, in Life, the common cry is: "Tell me precisely where I am, what doing, and where going! Let me be free of this fearful untidiness of not knowing all about it!" The favoured religions are always those whose message is most finite. The fashionable professions—they that end us in assured positions. The most popular works of fiction, such

as leave nothing to our imagination. And to this craving after prose, who would not be lenient, that has at all known life, with its usual predominance of our lower and less courageous selves, our constant hankering after the cosey closed door and line of least resistance? We are continually begging to be allowed to know for certain; though, if our prayer were granted, and Mystery no longer hovered, made blue the hills, and turned day into night, we should, as surely, wail at once to be delivered of that ghastliness of knowing things for certain!

Now, in Art, I would never quarrel with a certain living writer who demands of it the kind of finality implied in what he calls a "moral discovery"—using, no doubt, the words in their widest sense. I would maintain, however, that such finality is not confined to positively discovering the true conclusion of premises laid down; but that it may also distil gradually, negatively from the whole work, in a moral discovery, as it were, of Author. In other words, that, permeation by an essential point of view, by emanation of author, may so unify and vitalize a work, as to give it all the finality that need be required of Art. For the finality that is requisite to Art, be it positive or negative, is not the finality of dogma, nor the

finality of fact, it is ever the finality of feeling—of a spiritual light, subtly gleaned by the spectator out of that queer luminous haze which one man's nature must ever be to others. And herein, incidentally, it is that Art acquires also that quality of mystery, more needful to it even than finality, for the mystery that wraps a work of Art is the mystery of its maker, and the mystery of its maker is the difference between that maker's soul and every other soul.

But let me take an illustration of what I mean by these two kinds of finality that Art may have, and show that in essence they are but two halves of the same thing. The term "a work of Art" will not be denied, I think, to that early novel of M. Anatole France, "Le Lys Rouge." Now, that novel has *positive* finality, since the spiritual conclusion from its premises strikes one as true. But neither will the term "a work of Art" be denied to the same writer's four "Bergeret" volumes, whose *negative* finality consists only in the temperamental atmosphere wherein they are soaked. Now, if the theme of "Le Lys Rouge" had been treated by Tolstoy, Meredith, or Turgenev, we should have had spiritual conclusions from the same factual premises so different from M. France's as prunes from prisms, and yet, being

the work of equally great artists, they would, doubtless, have struck us as equally true. Is not, then, the positive finality of "Le Lys Rouge," though expressed in terms of a different craftsmanship, the same, in essence, as the negative finality of the "Bergeret" volumes? Are not both, in fact, merely flower of author true to himself? So long as the scent, colour, form of that flower is strong and fine enough to affect the senses of our spirit, then all the rest, surely, is academic—I would say, immaterial.

But here, in regard to Art, is where mankind at large comes on the field. "'Flower of author,'" it says, "'Senses of the spirit!' Phew! Give me something I can understand! Let me know where I am getting to!" In a word, it wants a finality different from that which Art can give. It will ask the artist, with irritation, what his solution, or his lesson, or his meaning, really is, having omitted to notice that the poor creature has been giving all the meaning that he can, in every sentence. It will demand to know why it was not told definitely what became of Charles or Mary in whom it had grown so interested; and will be almost frightened to learn that the artist knows no more than itself. And if by any chance it be required to dip its mind into a philosophy that does not promise it a defined

position both in this world and the next, it will assuredly recoil, and with a certain contempt say: "No, sir! This means nothing to me; and if it means anything to you—which I very much doubt —I am sorry for you!"

It must have facts, and again facts, not only in the present and the past, but in the future. And it demands facts of that, which alone cannot glibly give it facts. It goes on asking facts of Art, or, rather, such facts as Art cannot give—for, after all, even "flower of author" is fact in a sort of way.

Consider, for instance, Synge's masterpiece, "The Playboy of the Western World!" There is flower of author! What is it for mankind at large? An attack on the Irish character! A pretty piece of writing! An amusing farce! Enigmatic cynicism leading nowhere! A puzzling fellow wrote it! Mankind at large has little patience with puzzling fellows.

Few, in fact, want flower of author. Moreover, it is a quality that may well be looked for where it does not exist. To say that the finality which Art requires is merely an enwrapping mood, or flower of author, is not by any means to say that any robust fellow, slamming his notions down in ink, can give us these. Indeed, no! So long as

we see the author's proper person in his work, we do not see the flower of him. Let him retreat himself, if he pretend to be an artist. There is no less of subtle skill, no less impersonality, in the "Bergeret" volumes than in "Le Lys Rouge." No less labour and mental torturing went to their making, page by page, in order that they might exhale their perfume of mysterious finality, their withdrawn but implicit judgment. Flower of author is not quite so common as the buttercup, the Californian poppy, or the gay Texan gaillardia, and for that very reason the finality it gives off will never be robust enough for a mankind at large that would have things cut and dried, and labelled in thick letters. For, consider—to take one phase alone of this demand for factual finality—how continual and insistent is the cry for characters that can be worshipped; how intense and persistent the desire to be told that Charles was a real hero; and how bitter the regret that Mary was no better than she should be! Mankind at large wants heroes that are heroes, and heroines that are heroines—and nothing so inappropriate to them as unhappy endings.

Travelling away, I remember, from that Grand Canyon of Arizona were a young man and a young woman, evidently in love. He was sitting very

close to her, and reading aloud for her pleasure, from a paper-covered novel, heroically oblivious of us all:

"'Sir Robert,' she murmured, lifting her beauteous eyes, 'I may not tempt you, for you are too dear to me!' Sir Robert held her lovely face between his two strong hands. 'Farewell!' he said, and went out into the night. But something told them both that, when he had fulfilled his duty, Sir Robert would return. . . ." He had not returned before we reached the Junction, but there was finality about that baronet, and we well knew that he ultimately would. And, long after the sound of that young man's faithful reading had died out of our ears, we meditated on Sir Robert, and compared him with the famous characters of fiction, slowly perceiving that they were none of them so final in their heroism as he. No, none of them reached that apex. For Hamlet was a most unfinished fellow, and Lear extremely violent. Pickwick addicted to punch, and Sam Weller to lying; Bazarof actually a Nihilist, and Irina—! Levin and Anna, Pierre and Natasha, all of them stormy and unsatisfactory at times. "Un Cœur Simple" nothing but a servant, and an old maid at that; "Saint Julien l'Hospitalier" a sheer fanatic. Colonel Newcome too irritable and too

simple altogether. Don Quixote certified insane. Hilda Wangel, Nora, Hedda—Sir Robert would never even have spoken to such baggages! Monsieur Bergeret—an amiable weak thing! D'Artagnan—a true swashbuckler! Tom Jones, Faust, Don Juan—we might not even think of them. And those poor Greeks: Prometheus—shocking rebel. Œdipus—for a long time banished by the Censor. Phædra and Elektra, not even so virtuous as Mary, who failed of being what she should be! And coming to more familiar persons—Joseph and Moses, David and Elijah, all of them lacked his finality of true heroism—none could quite pass muster beside Sir Robert. . . . Long we meditated, and, reflecting that an author must ever be superior to the creatures of his brain, were refreshed to think that there were so many living authors capable of giving birth to Sir Robert; for indeed, Sir Robert and finality like his—no doubtful heroes, no flower of author, and no mystery—is what mankind at large has always wanted from Letters, and will always want.

As truly as that oil and water do not mix, there are two kinds of men. The main cleavage in the whole tale of life is this subtle, all-pervading division of mankind into the man of facts and the man of feeling. And not by what they are or do

can they be told one from the other, but just by their attitude toward finality. Fortunately most of us are neither quite the one nor quite the other. But between the pure-blooded of each kind there is real antipathy, far deeper than the antipathies of race, politics, or religion—an antipathy that not circumstance, love, good-will, or necessity will ever quite get rid of. Sooner shall the panther agree with the bull than that other one with the man of facts. There is no bridging the gorge that divides these worlds.

Nor is it so easy to tell, of each, to which world he belongs, as it was to place the lady, who held out her finger over that gorge called Grand Canyon, and said:

"It doesn't look thirteen miles; but they measured it just there! Excuse my pointing!"

1912.

WANTED—SCHOOLING

"*ET nous jongleurs inutiles, frivoles joueurs de luth!*" . . . Useless jugglers, frivolous players on the lute! Must we so describe ourselves, we, the producers, season by season, of so many hundreds of "remarkable" works of fiction?—for though, when we take up the remarkable works of our fellows, we "really cannot read them!" the Press and the advertisements of our publishers tell us that they *are* "remarkable."

A story goes that once in the twilight undergrowth of a forest of nut-bearing trees a number of little purblind creatures wandered, singing for nuts. On some of these purblind creatures the nuts fell heavy and full, extremely indigestible, and were quickly swallowed; on others they fell light, and contained nothing, because the kernel had already been eaten up above, and these light and kernel-less nuts were accompanied by sibilations or laughter. On others again no nuts at all, empty or full, came down. But nuts or no nuts, full nuts or empty nuts, the purblind creatures below went on wandering and singing. A traveller

one day stopped one of these creatures whose voice was peculiarly disagreeable, and asked: "Why do you sing like this? Is it for pleasure that you do it, or for pain? What do you get out of it? Is it for the sake of those up there? Is it for your own sake—for the sake of your family—for whose sake? Do you think your songs worth listening to? Answer!"

The creature scratched itself, and sang the louder.

"Ah! Cacoethes! I pity, but do not blame you," said the traveller.

He left the creature, and presently came to another which sang a squeaky treble song. It wandered round in a ring under a grove of stunted trees, and the traveller noticed that it never went out of that grove.

"Is it really necessary," he said, "for you to express yourself thus?"

And as he spoke showers of tiny hard nuts came down on the little creature, who ate them greedily. The traveller opened one; it was extremely small and tasted of dry rot.

"Why, at all events," he said, "need you stay under these trees? the nuts are not good here."

But for answer the little creature ran round and round, and round and round.

"I suppose," said the traveller, "small bad nuts

are better than no bread; if you went out of this grove you would starve?"

The purblind little creature shrieked. The traveller took the sound for affirmation, and passed on. He came to a third little creature who, under a tall tree, was singing very loudly indeed, while all around was a great silence, broken only by sounds like the snuffling of small noses. The creature stopped singing as the traveller came up, and at once a storm of huge nuts came down; the traveller found them sweetish and very oily.

"Why," he said to the creature, "did you sing so loud? You cannot eat all these nuts. You really do sing louder than seems necessary; come, answer me!"

But the purblind little creature began to sing again at the top of its voice, and the noise of the snuffling of small noses became so great that the traveller hastened away. He passed many other purblind little creatures in the twilight of this forest, till at last he came to one that looked even blinder than the rest, but whose song was sweet and low and clear, breaking a perfect stillness; and the traveller sat down to listen. For a long time he listened to that song without noticing that not a nut was falling. But suddenly he heard a faint rustle and three little oval nuts lay on the ground.

The traveller cracked one of them. It was of delicate flavour. He looked at the little creature standing with its face raised, and said:

"Tell me, little blind creature, whose song is so charming, where did you learn to sing?"

The little creature turned its head a trifle to one side as though listening for the fall of nuts.

"Ah, indeed!" said the traveller: "You, whose voice is so clear, is this all you get to eat?"

The little blind creature smiled. . . .

It is a twilight forest in which we writers of fiction wander, and once in a way, though all this has been said before, we may as well remind ourselves and others why the light is so dim; why there is so much bad and false fiction; why the demand for it is so great. Living in a world where demand creates supply, we writers of fiction furnish the exception to this rule. For, consider how, as a class, we come into existence. Unlike the followers of any other occupation, nothing whatever compels any one of us to serve an apprenticeship. We go to no school, have to pass no examination, attain no standard, receive no diploma. We need not study that which should be studied; we are at liberty to flood our minds with all that should not be studied. Like mushrooms, in a single night we spring up—a pen in our hands, very little in our brains, and who-knows-what in our hearts!

Few of us sit down in cold blood to write our first stories; we have something in us that we feel we must express. This is the beginning of the vicious circle. Our first books often have something in them. We are sincere in trying to express that something. It is true we cannot express it, not having learnt how, but its ghost haunts the pages—the ghost of real experience and real life—just enough to attract the untrained intelligence, just enough to make a generous Press remark: "This shows promise." We have tasted blood, we pant for more. Those of us who had a carking occupation hasten to throw it aside, those who had no occupation have now found one; some few of us keep both the old occupation and the new. Whichever of these courses we pursue, the hurry with which we pursue it undoes us. For, often we have only that one book in us, which we did not know how to write, and having expressed that which we have felt, we are driven in our second, our third, our fourth, to warm up variations, like those dressed remains of last night's dinner which are served for lunch; or to spin from our usually commonplace imaginations thin extravagances which those who do not try to think for themselves are ever ready to accept as full of inspiration and vitality. Anything for a book, we say—anything for a book!

From time immemorial we have acted in this immoral manner, till we have accustomed the Press and Public to expect it. From time immemorial we have allowed ourselves to be driven by those powerful drivers, Bread, and Praise, and cared little for the quality of either. Sensibly, or insensibly, we tune our songs to earn the nuts of our twilight forest. We tune them, not to the key of: "Is it good?" but to the key of: "Will it pay?" and at each tuning the nuts fall fast! It is all so natural. How can we help it, seeing that we are undisciplined and standardless, seeing that we started without the backbone that schooling gives? Here and there among us is a genius, here and there a man of exceptional stability who trains himself in spite of all the forces working for his destruction. But those who do not publish until they can express, and do not express until they have something worth expressing, are so rare that they can be counted on the fingers of three or perhaps four hands; mercifully, we all—or nearly all—believe ourselves of that company.

It is the fashion to say that the public will have what it wants. Certainly the Public will have what it wants if what it wants is given to the Public. If what it now wants were suddenly withdrawn, the Public, the big Public, would by an obvious

natural law take the lowest of what remained; if that again were withdrawn, it would take the next lowest, until by degrees it took a relatively good article. The Public, the big Public, is a mechanical and helpless consumer at the mercy of what is supplied to it, and this must ever be so. The Public then is not to blame for the supply of bad, false fiction. The Press is not to blame, for the Press, like the Public, must take what is set before it; their Critics, for the most part, like ourselves have been to no school, passed no test of fitness, received no certificate; they cannot lead us, it is we who lead them, for without the Critics we could live but without us the Critics would die. We cannot, therefore, blame the Press. Nor is the Publisher to blame; for the Publisher will publish what is set before him. It is true that if he published no books on commission he would deserve the praise of the State, but it is quite unreasonable for us to expect him to deserve the praise of the State, since it is we who supply him with these books and incite him to publish them. We cannot, therefore, lay the blame on the Publisher.

We must lay the blame where it clearly should be laid, on ourselves. We ourselves create the demand for bad and false fiction. Very many of us have private means; for such there is no excuse.

Very many of us have none; for such, once started on this journey of fiction, there is much, often tragic, excuse—the less reason then for not having trained ourselves before setting out on our way. There is no getting out of it; the fault is ours. If we will not put ourselves to school when we are young; if we must rush into print before we can spell; if we will not repress our natural desires and walk before we run; if we will not learn at least what not to do—we shall go on wandering through the forest, singing our foolish songs.

And since we cannot train ourselves except by writing, let us write, and burn what we write; then shall we soon stop writing, or produce what we need not burn!

For, as things are now, without compass, without map, we set out into the twilight forest of fiction; without path, without track—and we never emerge.

Yes, with the French writer, we must say:

"*Et nous jongleurs inutiles, frivoles joueurs de luth!*" . . .

1906.

REFLECTIONS ON OUR DISLIKE OF THINGS AS THEY ARE

YES! Why is this the chief characteristic of our art? What secret instincts are responsible for this inveterate distaste? But, first, is it true that we have it?

To stand still and look at a thing for the joy of looking, without reference to any material advantage, and personal benefit, either to ourselves or our neighbours, just simply to indulge our curiosity! Is that a British habit? I think not.

If, on some November afternoon, we walk into Kensington Gardens, where they join the Park on the Bayswater side, and, crossing in front of the ornamental fountain, glance at the semicircular seat let into a dismal little Temple of the Sun, we shall see a half-moon of apathetic figures. There, enjoying a moment of lugubrious idleness, may be sitting an old countrywoman with steady eyes in a lean, dusty-black dress and an old poke-bonnet; by her side, some gin-faced creature of the town, all blousy and draggled; a hollow-eyed foreigner, far gone in consumption; a bronzed

young navvy, asleep, with his muddy boots jutting straight out; a bearded, dreary being, chin on chest; and more consumptives, and more vagabonds, and more people dead-tired, speechless, and staring before them from that crescent-shaped haven where there is no draught at their backs, and the sun occasionally shines. And as we look at them, according to the state of our temper, we think: Poor creatures, I wish I could do something for them! or: Revolting! They oughtn't to allow it! But do we feel any pleasure in just watching them; any of that intimate sensation a cat entertains when its back is being rubbed; are we curiously enjoying the sight of these people, simply as manifestations of life, as objects fashioned by the ebb and flow of its tides? Again, I think, not. And why? Either, because we have instantly felt that we ought to do something; that here is a danger in our midst, which one day might affect our own security; and at all events, a sight revolting to us who came out to look at this remarkably fine fountain. Or, because we are too humane! Though very possibly that frequent murmuring of ours: Ah! It's too sad! is but another way of putting the words: Stand aside, please, you're too depressing! Or, again, is it that we avoid the sight of things as they are, avoid the

unedifying, because of what may be called "the uncreative instinct," that safeguard and concomitant of a civilisation which demands of us complete efficiency, practical and thorough employment of every second of our time and every inch of our space? We know, of course, that out of nothing nothing can be made, that to "create" anything a man must first receive impressions, and that to receive impressions requires an apparatus of nerves and feelers, exposed and quivering to every vibration round it, an apparatus so entirely opposed to our national spirit and traditions that the bare thought of it causes us to blush. A robust recognition of this, a steadfast resolve not to be forced out of the current of strenuous civilisation into the sleepy backwater of pure impressionism, makes us distrustful of attempts to foster in ourselves that receptivity and subsequent creativeness, the microbes of which exist in every man. To watch a thing simply because it is a thing, entirely without considering how it can affect us, and without even seeing at the moment how we are to get anything out of it, jars our consciences, jars that inner feeling which keeps secure and makes harmonious the whole concert of our lives, for we feel it to be a waste of time, dangerous to the community, contributing neither to our meat

and drink, our clothes and comfort, nor to the stability and order of our lives.

Of these three possible reasons for our dislike of things as they are, the first two are perhaps contained within the third. But, to whatever our dislike is due, we have it—Oh! we have it! With the possible exception of Hogarth in his non-preaching pictures, and Constable in his sketches of the sky,—I speak of dead men only,—have we produced any painter of reality like Manet or Millet, any writer like Flaubert or Maupassant, like Turgenev, or Tchekov. We are, I think, too deeply civilised, so deeply civilised that we have come to look on Nature as indecent. The acts and emotions of life undraped with ethics seem to us anathema. It has long been, and still is, the fashion among the intellectuals of the Continent to regard us as barbarians in most æsthetic matters. Ah! If they only knew how infinitely barbarous they seem to us in their naïve contempt of our barbarism, and in what we regard as their infantine concern with things as they are. How far have we not gone past all that—we of the oldest settled Western country, who have so veneered our lives that we no longer know of what wood they are made! Whom generations have so soaked with the preserve "good form" that we are impervious

to the claims and clamour of that ill-bred creature —life! Who think it either dreadful, or *vieux jeu*, that such things as the crude emotions and the raw struggles of Fate should be even mentioned, much less presented in terms of art! For whom an artist is 'suspect' if he is not, in his work, a sportsman and a gentleman? Who shake a solemn head over writers who *will* treat of sex; and, with the remark: "Worst of it is, there's so much truth in those fellows!" close the book.

Ah! well! I suppose we have been too long familiar with the unprofitableness of speculation, have surrendered too definitely to action—to the material side of things, retaining for what relaxation our spirits may require, a habit of sentimental aspiration, carefully divorced from things as they are. We seem to have decided that things are not, or, if they are, ought not to be—and what is the good of thinking of things like that? In fact, our national ideal has become the Will to Health, to Material Efficiency, and to it we have sacrificed the Will to Sensibility. It is a point of view. And yet —to the philosophy that craves Perfection, to the spirit that desires the golden mean, and hankers for the serene and balanced seat in the centre of the see-saw, it seems a little pitiful, and constricted; a confession of defeat, a hedging and

limitation of the soul. Need we put up with this, must we for ever turn our eyes away from things as they are, stifle our imaginations and our sensibilities, for fear that they should become our masters, and destroy our sanity? This is the eternal question that confronts the artist and the thinker. Because of the inevitable decline after full flowering-point is reached, the inevitable fading of the fire that follows the full flame and glow, are we to recoil from striving to reach the perfect and harmonious climacteric? Better to have loved and lost, I think, than never to have loved at all; better to reach out and grasp the fullest expression of the individual and the national soul, than to keep for ever under the shelter of the wall. I would even think it possible to be sensitive without neurasthenia, to be sympathetic without insanity, to be alive to all the winds that blow without getting influenza. God forbid that our Letters and our Arts should decade into Beardsleyism; but between that and their present "health" there lies full flowering-point, not yet, by a long way, reached.

To flower like that, I suspect, we must see things just a little more—as they are!

1905–1912.

THE WINDLESTRAW

A CERTAIN writer, returning one afternoon from rehearsal of his play, sat down in the hall of the hotel where he was staying. "No," he reflected, "this play of mine will not please the Public; it is gloomy, almost terrible. This very day I read these words in my morning paper: 'No artist can afford to despise his Public, for, whether he confesses it or not, the artist exists to give the Public what it wants.' I have, then, not only done what I cannot afford to do, but I have been false to the reason of my existence."

The hall was full of people, for it was the hour of tea; and looking round him, the writer thought: "And this *is* the Public—the Public that my play is destined not to please!" And for several minutes he looked at them as if he had been hypnotised. Presently, between two tables he noticed a waiter standing, lost in his thoughts. The mask of the man's professional civility had come awry, and the expression of his face and figure was curiously remote from the faces and forms of those from whom he had been taking orders; he seemed

like a bird discovered in its own haunts, all unconscious as yet of human eyes. And the writer thought: "But if those people at the tables are the Public, what is that waiter? How if I was mistaken, and not they, but *he* were the real Public?" And testing this thought, his mind began at once to range over all the people he had lately seen. He thought of the Founder's Day dinner of a great School, which he had attended the night before. "No," he mused, "I see very little resemblance between the men at that dinner and the men in this hall; still less between them and the waiter. How if *they* were the real Public, and neither the waiter, nor these people here!" But no sooner had he made this reflection, than he bethought him of a gathering of workers whom he had watched two days ago. "Again," he mused, "I do not recollect any resemblance at all between those workers and the men at the dinner, and certainly they are not like any one here. What if those workers are the real Public, not the men at the dinner, nor the waiter, nor the people in this hall!" And thereupon his mind flew off again, and this time rested on the figures of his own immediate circle of friends. They seemed very different from the four real Publics whom he had as yet discovered. "Yes," he considered,

"when I come to think of it, my associates—painters, and writers, and critics, and all that kind of person—do not seem to have anything to speak of in common with any of these people. Perhaps my own associates, then, are the real Public, and not these others!" Perceiving that this would be the fifth real Public, he felt discouraged. But presently he began to think: "The past is the past and cannot be undone, and with this play of mine I shall not please the Public; but there is always the future! Now, I do not wish to do what the artist cannot afford to do, I earnestly desire to be true to the reason of my existence; and since the reason of that existence is to give the Public what it wants, it is really vital to discover who and what the Public is!" And he began to look very closely at the faces around him, hoping to find out from types what he had failed to ascertain from classes. Two men were sitting near, one on each side of a woman. The first, who was all crumpled in his arm-chair, had curly lips and wrinkles round the eyes, cheeks at once rather fat and rather shadowy, and a dimple in his chin. It seemed certain that he was humourous, and kind, sympathetic, rather diffident, speculative, moderately intelligent, with the rudiments perhaps of an imagination. And he looked

at the second man, who was sitting very upright, as if he had a particularly fine backbone, of which he was not a little proud. He was extremely big and handsome, with pronounced and regular nose and chin, firm, well-cut lips beneath a smooth moustache, direct and rather insolent eyes, a somewhat receding forehead, and an air of mastery over all around. It was obvious that he possessed a complete knowledge of his own mind, some brutality, much practical intelligence, great resolution, no imagination, and plenty of conceit. And he looked at the woman. She was pretty, but her face was vapid, and seemed to have no character at all. And from one to the other he looked, and the more he looked the less resemblance he saw between them, till the objects of his scrutiny grew restive. Then, ceasing to examine them, an idea came to him. "No! The Public is not this or that class, this or that type; the Public is an hypothetical average human being, endowed with average human qualities—a distillation, in fact, of all the people in this hall, the people in the street outside, the people of this country everywhere." And for a moment he was pleased; but soon he began again to feel uneasy. "Since," he reflected, "it is necessary for me to supply this hypothetical average human being

with what he wants, I shall have to find out how to distil him from all the ingredients around me. Now how am I to do that? It will certainly take me more than all my life to collect and boil the souls of all of them, which is necessary if I am to extract the genuine article, and I should then apparently have no time left to supply the precipitated spirit, when I had obtained it, with what it wanted! Yet this hypothetical average human being must be found, or I must stay for ever haunted by the thought that I am not supplying him with what he wants!" And the writer became more and more discouraged, for to arrogate to himself knowledge of all the heights and depths, and even of all the virtues and vices, tastes and dislikes of all the people of the country, without having first obtained it, seemed to him to savour of insolence. And still more did it appear impertinent, having taken this mass of knowledge which he had not got, to extract from it a golden-mean man, in order to supply him with what he wanted. And yet this was what every artist did who justified his existence—or it would not have been so stated in a newspaper. And he gazed up at the lofty ceiling, as if he might perchance see the Public flying up there in the faint bluish mist of smoke. And suddenly he thought: "Sup-

pose, by some miracle, my golden-mean bird came flying to me with its beak open for the food with which it is my duty to supply it—would it after all be such a very strange-looking creature; would it not be extremely like my normal self? Am I not, in fact, myself the Public? For, without the strongest and most reprehensible conceit, can I claim for my normal self a single attribute or quality not possessed by an hypothetical average human being? Yes, I *am* myself the Public; or at all events all that my consciousness can ever know of it for certain." And he began to consider deeply. For sitting there in cold blood, with his nerves at rest, and his brain and senses normal, the play he had written did seem to him to put an unnecessary strain upon the faculties. "Ah!" he thought, "in future I must take good care never to write anything except in cold blood, with my nerves well clothed, and my brain and senses quiet. I ought only to write when I feel as normal as I do now." And for some minutes he remained motionless, looking at his boots. Then there crept into his mind an uncomfortable thought. "But have I ever written anything without feeling a little—abnormal, at the time? Have I ever even felt *inclined* to write anything, until my emotions had been unduly excited, my brain immoder-

ately stirred, my senses unusually quickened, or my spirit extravagantly roused? Never! Alas, never! I am then a miserable renegade, false to the whole purpose of my being—nor do I see the slightest hope of becoming a better man, a less unworthy artist! For I literally cannot write without the stimulus of some feeling exaggerated at the expense of other feelings. What has been in the past will be in the future: I shall never be taking up my pen when I feel my comfortable and normal self—never be satisfying that self which is the Public!" And he thought: "I am lost. For, to satisfy that normal self, to give the Public what it wants, is, I am told, and therefore must believe, what all artists exist for. Æschylus in his 'Choephoræ' and his 'Prometheus'; Sophocles in his 'Œdipus Tyrannus'; Euripides when he wrote 'The Trojan Women,' 'Medea,' and 'Hippolytus'; Shakespeare in his 'Lear'; Goethe in his 'Faust'; Ibsen in his 'Ghosts' and his 'Peer Gynt'; Tolstoy in 'The Powers of Darkness'; all—all in those great works, must have satisfied their most comfortable and normal selves; all - all must have given to the average human being, to the Public, what it wants; for to do that, we know, was the reason of their existence, and who shall say those noble artists were not true to

it? That is surely unthinkable. And yet—and yet—we are assured, and, indeed, it is true, that there is no real Public in this country for just those plays! Therefore Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Shakespeare, Gœthe, Ibsen, Tolstoy, in their greatest works did *not* give the Public what it wants, did not satisfy the average human being, their more comfortable and normal selves, and as artists were not true to the reason of their existence. Therefore they were not artists, which is unthinkable; therefore I have not yet found the Public!"

And perceiving that in this impasse his last hope of discovery had foundered, the writer let his head fall on his chest.

But even as he did so a gleam of light, like a faint moonbeam, stole out into the garden of his despair. "Is it possible," he thought, "that, by a writer, until his play has been performed (when, alas! it is too late), 'the Public' is inconceivable—in fact that for him there is no such thing? But if there be no such thing, I cannot exist to give it what it wants. What then *is* the reason of my existence? Am I but a windlestraw?" And wearied out with his perplexity, he fell into a doze. And while he dozed he dreamed that he saw the figure of a woman standing in

darkness, from whose face and form came a misty refulgence, such as steals out into the dusk from white campion flowers along summer hedgerows. She was holding her pale hands before her, wide apart, with the palms turned down, quivering as might doves about to settle; and for all it was so dark, her grey eyes were visible—full of light, with black rims round the irises. To gaze at those eyes was almost painful; for though they were beautiful, they seemed to see right through his soul, to pass him by, as though on a far discovering voyage, and forbidden to rest.

The dreamer spoke to her: "Who are you, standing there in the darkness with those eyes that I can hardly bear to look at? Who are you?"

And the woman answered: "Friend, I am your Conscience; I am the Truth as best it may be seen by you. I am she whom you exist to serve." With those words she vanished, and the writer woke. A boy was standing before him with the evening papers.

To cover his confusion at being caught asleep he purchased one and began to read a leading article. It commenced with these words: "There are certain playwrights taking themselves very seriously; might we suggest to them that they are in danger of becoming ridiculous. . . ."

The writer let fall his hand, and the paper fluttered to the ground. "The Public," he thought, "I am *not able* to take seriously, because I cannot conceive what it may be; myself, my conscience, I am told I *must* not take seriously, or I become ridiculous. Yes, I am indeed lost!"

And with a feeling of elation, as of a straw blown on every wind, he arose.

1910.

ABOUT CENSORSHIP

SINCE, time and again, it has been proved, in this country of free institutions, that the great majority of our fellow-countrymen consider the only Censorship that now obtains amongst us, namely the Censorship of Plays, a bulwark for the preservation of their comfort and sensibility against the spiritual researches and speculations of bolder and too active spirits—it has become time to consider whether we should not seriously extend a principle, so grateful to the majority, to all our institutions.

For no one can deny that in practice the Censorship of Drama works with a smooth swiftness—a lack of delay and friction unexampled in any public office. No troublesome publicity and tedious postponement for the purpose of appeal mar its efficiency. It is neither hampered by the Law nor by the slow process of popular election. Welcomed by the overwhelming majority of the public; objected to only by such persons as suffer from it, and a negligible faction, who, wedded pedantically to liberty of the subject, are resentful of summary

powers vested in a single person responsible only to his own conscience—it is amazingly, triumphantly, successful.

Why, then, in a democratic State, is so valuable a protector of the will, the interests, and pleasure of the majority not bestowed on other branches of the public being? Opponents of the Censorship of Plays have been led by the absence of such other Censorships to conclude that this Office is an archaic survival, persisting into times that have outgrown it. They have been known to allege that the reason of its survival is simply the fact that Dramatic Authors, whose reputation and means of livelihood it threatens, have ever been few in number and poorly organised—that the reason, in short, is the helplessness and weakness of the interests concerned. We must all combat with force such an aspersion on our Legislature. Can it even for a second be supposed that a State which gives trial by Jury to the meanest, poorest, most helpless of its citizens, and concedes to the greatest criminals the right of appeal, could have debarred a body of reputable men from the ordinary rights of citizenship for so cynical a reason as that their numbers were small, their interests unjoined, their protests feeble? Such a supposition were intolerable! We do not in this country deprive

a class of citizens of their ordinary rights, we do not place their produce under the irresponsible control of one not amenable to Law, by any sort of political accident! That would indeed be to laugh at Justice in this Kingdom! That would indeed be cynical and unsound! We must never admit that there is no basic Justice controlling the edifice of our Civic Rights. We do, we must, conclude that a just and well-considered principle underlies this despotic Institution; for surely, else, it would not be suffered to survive for a single moment! Pom! Pom!

If, then, the Censorship of Plays be just, beneficent, and based on a well-considered principle, we must rightly inquire what good and logical reason there is for the absence of Censorship in other departments of the national life. If Censorship of the Drama be in the real interests of the people, or at all events in what the Censor for the time being conceives to be their interest—then Censorships of Art, Literature, Religion, Science, and Politics are in the interests of the people, unless it can be proved that there exists essential difference between the Drama and these other branches of the public being. Let us consider whether there is any such essential difference.

It is fact, beyond dispute, that every year num-

bers of books appear which strain the average reader's intelligence and sensibilities to an unendurable extent; books whose speculations are totally unsuited to normal thinking powers; books which contain views of morality divergent from the customary, and discussions of themes unsuited to the young person; books which, in fine, provide the greater Public with no pleasure whatsoever, and, either by harrowing their feelings or offending their good taste, cause them real pain.

It is true that, precisely as in the case of Plays, the Public are protected by a vigilant and critical Press from works of this description; that, further, they are protected by the commercial instinct of the Libraries, who will not stock an article which may offend their customers—just as, in the case of Plays, the Public are protected by the common-sense of theatrical Managers; that, finally, they are protected by the Police and the Common Law of the land. But despite all these protections, it is no uncommon thing for an average citizen to purchase one of these disturbing or dubious books. Has he, on discovering its true nature, the right to call on the bookseller to refund its value? He has not. And thus he runs a danger obviated in the case of the Drama which has the protection of a prudential Censorship. For this reason alone,

how much better, then, that there should exist a paternal authority (some, no doubt, will call it grand-maternal—but sneers must not be confounded with argument) to suppress these books before appearance, and safeguard us from the danger of buying and possibly reading undesirable or painful literature!

A specious reason, however, is advanced for exempting Literature from the Censorship accorded to Plays. He—it is said—who attends the performance of a play, attends it in public, where his feelings may be harrowed and his taste offended, cheek by jowl with boys, or women of all ages; it may even chance that he has taken to this entertainment his wife, or the young persons of his household. He—on the other hand—who reads a book, reads it in privacy. True; but the wielder of this argument has clasped his fingers round a two-edged blade. The very fact that the book has no mixed audience removes from Literature an element which is ever the greatest check on licentiousness in Drama. No manager of a theatre,—a man of the world engaged in the acquisition of his livelihood,—unless guaranteed by the license of the Censor, dare risk the presentment before a mixed audience of that which might cause an *émeute* among his clients. It has, indeed, always

been observed that the theatrical manager, almost without exception, thoughtfully recoils from the responsibility that would be thrust on him by the abolition of the Censorship. The fear of the mixed audience is ever suspended above his head. No such fear threatens the publisher, who displays his wares to one man at a time. And for this very reason of the mixed audience, perpetually and perversely cited to the contrary by such as have no firm grasp of this matter, there is a greater necessity for a Censorship on Literature than for one on Plays.

Further, if there were but a Censorship of Literature, no matter how dubious the books that were allowed to pass, the conscience of no reader need ever be troubled. For, that the perfect rest of the public conscience is the first result of Censorship, is proved to certainty by the protected Drama, since many dubious plays are yearly put before the play-going Public without tending in any way to disturb a complacency engendered by the security from harm guaranteed by this beneficent, if despotic, Institution. Pundits who, to the discomfort of the populace, foster this exemption of Literature from discipline, cling to the old-fashioned notion that ulcers should be encouraged to discharge themselves upon the surface, instead

of being quietly and decently driven into the system and allowed to fester there.

The remaining plea for exempting Literature from Censorship, put forward by unreflecting persons: That it would require too many Censors —besides being unworthy, is, on the face of it, erroneous. Special tests have never been thought necessary in appointing Examiners of Plays. They would, indeed, not only be unnecessary, but positively dangerous, seeing that the essential function of Censorship is protection of the ordinary prejudices and forms of thought. There would, then, be no difficulty in securing tomorrow as many Censors of Literature as might be necessary (say twenty or thirty); since all that would be required of each one of them would be that he should secretly exercise, in his uncontrolled discretion, his individual taste. In a word, this Free Literature of ours protects advancing thought and speculation; and those who believe in civic freedom subject only to Common Law, and espouse the cause of free literature, are championing a system which is essentially undemocratic, essentially inimical to the will of the majority, who have certainly no desire for any such things as advancing thought and speculation. Such persons, indeed, merely hold the faith that the *People*,

as a whole, unprotected by the despotic judgments of single persons, have enough strength and wisdom to know what is and what is not harmful to themselves. They put their trust in a Public Press and a Common Law, which deriving from the Conscience of the Country, is openly administered and within the reach of all. How absurd, how inadequate this all is we see from the existence of the Censorship on Drama.

Having observed that there is no reason whatever for the exemption of Literature, let us now turn to the case of Art. Every picture hung in a gallery, every statue placed on a pedestal, is exposed to the public stare of a mixed company. Why, then, have we no Censorship to protect us from the possibility of encountering works that bring blushes to the cheek of the young person? The reason cannot be that the proprietors of Galleries are more worthy of trust than the managers of Theatres; this would be to make an odious distinction which those very Managers who uphold the Censorship of Plays would be the first to resent. It is true that Societies of artists and the proprietors of Galleries are subject to the prosecution of the Law if they offend against the ordinary standards of public decency; but precisely the same liability attaches to theatrical managers and proprietors of Theatres, in whose case it has been

found necessary and beneficial to add the Censorship. And in this connection let it once more be noted how much more easily the ordinary standards of public decency can be assessed by a single person responsible to no one, than by the clumsy (if more open) process of public protest.

What, then, in the light of the proved justice and efficiency of the Censorship of Drama, *is* the reason for the absence of the Censorship of Art? The more closely the matter is regarded, the more plain it is, that *there is none!* At any moment we may have to look upon some painting, or contemplate some statue, as tragic, heart-rending, and dubiously delicate in theme as that censured play "The Cenci," by one Shelley; as dangerous to prejudice, and suggestive of new thought as the censured "Ghosts," by one Ibsen. Let us protest against this peril suspended over our heads, and demand the immediate appointment of a single person not selected for any pretentiously artistic feelings, but endowed with summary powers of prohibiting the exhibition, in public galleries or places, of such works as he shall deem, in his uncontrolled discretion, unsuited to average intelligence or sensibility. Let us demand it in the interest, not only of the young person, but of those whole sections of the community which cannot be expected to take an

interest in Art, and to whom the purpose, speculations, and achievements of great artists, working not only for to-day but for to-morrow, must naturally be dark riddles. Let us even require that this official should be empowered to order the destruction of the works which he has deemed unsuited to average intelligence and sensibility, lest their creators should, by private sale, make a profit out of them, such as, in the nature of the case, Dramatic Authors are debarred from making out of plays which, having been censured, cannot be played for money. Let us ask this with confidence; for it is not compatible with common justice that there should be any favouring of Painter over Playwright. They are both artists—let them both be measured by the same last!

But let us now consider the case of Science. It will not, indeed cannot, be contended that the investigations of scientific men, whether committed to writing or to speech, are always suited to the taste and capacities of our general public. There was, for example, the well-known doctrine of Evolution, the teachings of Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace, who gathered up certain facts, hitherto but vaguely known, into presentments, irreverent and startling, which, at the time, profoundly disturbed every normal mind. Not

only did religion, as then accepted, suffer in this cataclysm, but our taste and feeling were inexpressibly shocked by the discovery, so emphasised by Thomas Henry Huxley, of Man's descent from Apes. It was felt, and is felt by many to this day, that the advancement of that theory grossly and dangerously violated every canon of decency. What pain, then, might have been averted, what far-reaching consequences and incalculable subversion of primitive faiths checked, if some judicious Censor of scientific thought had existed in those days to demand, in accordance with his private estimate of the will and temper of the majority, the suppression of the doctrine of Evolution.

Innumerable investigations of scientists on subjects such as the date of the world's creation, have from time to time been summarised and inconsiderately sprung on a Public shocked and startled by the revelation that facts which they were accustomed to revere were conspicuously at fault. So, too, in the range of medicine, it would be difficult to cite any radical discovery (such as the preventive power of vaccination), whose unchecked publication has not violated the prejudices and disturbed the immediate comfort of the common mind. Had these discoveries been judiciously

suppressed, or pared away to suit what a Censorship conceived to be the popular palate of the time, all this disturbance and discomfort might have been avoided.

It will doubtless be contended (for there are no such violent opponents of Censorship as those who are threatened with the same) that to compare a momentous disclosure, such as the doctrine of Evolution, to a mere drama, were unprofitable. The answer to this ungenerous contention is fortunately plain. Had a judicious Censorship existed over our scientific matters, such as for two hundred years has existed over our Drama, scientific discoveries *would have been no more disturbing and momentous than those which we are accustomed to see made on our nicely pruned and tutored stage.* For not only would the more dangerous and penetrating scientific truths have been carefully destroyed at birth, but scientists, aware that the results of investigations offensive to accepted notions would be suppressed, would long have ceased to waste their time in search of a knowledge repugnant to average intelligence, and thus foredoomed, and have occupied themselves with services more agreeable to the public taste, such as the rediscovery of truths already known and published.

Indissolubly connected with the desirability of a Censorship of Science, is the need for Religious Censorship. For in this, assuredly not the least important department of the nation's life, we are witnessing week by week and year by year, what in the light of the security guaranteed by the Censorship of Drama, we are justified in terming an alarming spectacle. Thousands of men are licensed to proclaim from their pulpits, Sunday after Sunday, their individual beliefs, quite regardless of the settled convictions of the masses of their congregations. It is true, indeed, that the vast majority of sermons (like the vast majority of plays) are, and will always be, harmonious with the feelings of the average citizen; for neither priest nor playwright have customarily any such peculiar gift of spiritual daring as might render them unsafe mentors of their fellows; and there is not wanting the deterrent of common-sense to keep them in bounds. Yet it can hardly be denied that there spring up at times men—like John Wesley or General Booth—of such incurable temperament as to be capable of abusing their freedom by the promulgation of doctrine or procedure, divergent from the current traditions of religion. Nor must it be forgotten that sermons, like plays, are addressed to a mixed audience of families, and that

the spiritual teachings of a lifetime may be destroyed by ten minutes of uncensured pronouncement from a pulpit, the while parents are sitting, not, as in a theatre vested with the right of protest, but dumb and excoriated to the soul, watching their children, perhaps of tender age, eagerly drinking in words at variance with that which they themselves have been at such pains to instil.

If a set of Censors—for it would, as in the case of Literature, indubitably require more than one (perhaps one hundred and eighty, but, for reasons already given, there should be no difficulty whatever in procuring them) endowed with the swift powers conferred by freedom from the dull tedium of responsibility, and not remarkable for religious temperament, were appointed, to whom all sermons and public addresses on religious subjects must be submitted before delivery, and whose duty after perusal should be to excise all portions not conformable to their private ideas of what was at the moment suitable to the Public's ears, we should be far on the road toward that proper preservation of the *status quo* so desirable if the faiths and ethical standards of the less exuberantly spiritual masses are to be maintained in their full bloom. As things now stand, the nation has absolutely nothing to safeguard it against religious progress.

We have seen, then, that Censorship is at least

as necessary over Literature, Art, Science, and Religion as it is over our Drama. We have now to call attention to the crowning need—the want of a Censorship in Politics.

If Censorship be based on justice, if it be proved to serve the Public and to be successful in its lonely vigil over Drama, it should, *and logically must be,* extended to all parallel cases; it cannot, it dare not, stop short at Politics. For, precisely in this supreme branch of the public life are we most menaced by the rule and license of the leading spirit. To appreciate this fact, we need only examine the Constitution of the House of Commons. Six hundred and seventy persons chosen from a population numbering four and forty millions, must necessarily, whatever their individual defects, be citizens of *more than average* enterprise, resource, and resolution. They are elected for a period that may last five years. Many of them are ambitious; some uncompromising; not a few enthusiastically eager to do something for their country; filled with designs and aspirations for national or social betterment, with which the masses, sunk in the immediate pursuits of life, can in the nature of things have little sympathy. And yet we find these men licensed to pour forth at pleasure, before mixed audiences, checked only by Common Law and Common-

Sense political utterances which may have the gravest, the most terrific consequences; utterances which may at any moment let loose revolution, or plunge the country into war; which often, as a fact, excite an utter detestation, terror, and mistrust; or shock the most sacred domestic and proprietary convictions in the breasts of vast majorities of their fellow-countrymen! And we incur this appalling risk for the want of a single, or at the most, a handful of Censors, invested with a simple but limitless discretion to excise or to suppress entirely such political utterances as may seem to their private judgments calculated to cause pain or moral disturbance in the average man. The masses, it is true, have their protection and remedy against injudicious or inflammatory politicians in the Law and the so-called democratic process of election; but we have seen that theatre audiences have also the protection of the Law, and the remedy of boycott, and that in their case this protection and this remedy are not deemed enough. What, then, shall we say of the case of Politics, where the dangers attending inflammatory or subversive utterance are greater a million fold, and the remedy a thousand times less expeditious?

Our Legislators have laid down Censorship as

the basic principle of Justice underlying the civic rights of dramatists. Then, let "Censorship for all" be their motto, and this country no longer be ridden and destroyed by free Institutions! Let them not only establish forthwith Censorships of Literature, Art, Science, and Religion, but also *place themselves* beneath the regimen with which they have calmly fettered Dramatic Authors. They cannot deem it becoming to their regard for justice, to their honour, to their sense of humour, to recoil from a restriction which, in a parallel case they have imposed on others. It is an old and homely saying that good officers never place their men in positions they would not themselves be willing to fill. And we are not entitled to believe that our Legislators, having set Dramatic Authors where they have been set, will—now that their duty is made plain—for a moment hesitate to step down and stand alongside.

But if by any chance they should recoil, and thus make answer: "We are ready at all times to submit to the Law and the People's will, and to bow to their demands, but we cannot and must not be asked to place our calling, our duty, and our honour beneath the irresponsible rule of an arbitrary autocrat, however sympathetic with the generality he may chance to be!" Then, we

would ask: "Sirs, did you ever hear of that great saying: 'Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you!'" For it is but fair presumption that the Dramatists, whom our Legislators have placed in bondage to a despot, are, no less than those Legislators, proud of their calling, conscious of their duty, and jealous of their honour.

1909.

VAGUE THOUGHTS ON ART

IT was on a day of rare beauty that I went out into the fields to try and gather these few thoughts. So golden and sweetly hot it was, that they came lazily, and with a flight no more coherent or responsible than the swoop of the very swallows; and, as in a play or poem, the result is conditioned by the conceiving mood, so I knew would be the nature of my diving, dipping, pale-throated, fork-tailed words. But, after all—I thought, sitting there—I need not take my critical pronouncements seriously. I have not the firm soul of the critic. It is not my profession to know things for certain, and to make others feel that certainty. On the contrary, I am often wrong – a luxury no critic can afford. And so, invading as I was the realm of others, I advanced with a light pen, feeling that none, and least of all myself, need expect me to be right.

What then—I thought—is Art? For I perceived that to think about it I must first define it; and I almost stopped thinking at all before the fearsome nature of that task. Then slowly in my mind gathered this group of words:

VAGUE THOUGHTS ON ART

Art is that imaginative expression of human energy, which, through technical concretion of feeling and perception, tends to reconcile the individual with the universal, by exciting in him impersonal emotion. And the greatest Art is that which excites the greatest impersonal emotion in an hypothecated perfect human being.

Impersonal emotion! And what—I thought—do I mean by that? Surely I mean: That is *not* Art, which, while I am contemplating it, inspires me with any active or directive impulse; that *is* Art, when, for however brief a moment, it replaces within me interest in myself by interest in itself. For, let me suppose myself in the presence of a carved marble bath. If my thoughts be: "What could I buy that for?" Impulse of acquisition; or: "From what quarry did it come?" Impulse of inquiry; or: "Which would be the right end for my head?" Mixed impulse of inquiry and acquisition—I am at that moment insensible to it as a work of Art. But, if I stand before it vibrating at sight of its colour and forms, if ever so little and for ever so short a time, unhaunted by any definite practical thought or impulse—to that extent and for that moment it has stolen me away out of myself and put itself there instead; has linked me to the universal by making

me forget the individual in me. And for that moment, and only while that moment lasts, it is to me a work of Art. The word "impersonal," then, is but used in this my definition to signify momentary forgetfulness of one's own personality and its active wants.

So Art—I thought—is that which, heard, read, or looked on, while producing no directive impulse, warms one with unconscious vibration. Nor can I imagine any means of defining what is the greatest Art, without hypothecating a perfect human being. But since we shall never see, or know if we do see, that desirable creature—dogmatism is banished, "Academy" is dead to the discussion, deader than even Tolstoy left it after his famous treatise "What is Art?" For, having destroyed all the old Judges and Academies, Tolstoy, by saying that the greatest Art was that which appealed to the greatest number of living human beings, raised up the masses of mankind to be a definite new Judge or Academy, as tyrannical and narrow as ever were those whom he had destroyed.

This, at all events—I thought—is as far as I dare go in defining what Art is. But let me try to make plain to myself what is the essential quality that gives to Art the power of exciting this unconscious vibration, this impersonal emotion. It

has been called Beauty! An awkward word—a perpetual begging of the question; too current in use, too ambiguous altogether; now too narrow, now too wide—a word, in fact, too glib to know at all what it means. And how dangerous a word—often misleading us into slabbing with extraneous floridities what would otherwise, on its own plane, be Art! To be decorative where decoration is not suitable, to be lyrical where lyricism is out of place, is assuredly to spoil Art, not to achieve it. But this essential quality of Art has also, and more happily, been called Rhythm. And, what is Rhythm if not that mysterious harmony between part and part, and part and whole, which gives what is called life; that exact proportion, the mystery of which is best grasped in observing how life leaves an animate creature when the essential relation of part to whole has been sufficiently disturbed. And I agree that this rhythmic relation of part to part, and part to whole—in short, vitality—is the one quality inseparable from a work of Art. For nothing which does not seem to a man possessed of this rhythmic vitality, can ever steal him out of himself.

And having got thus far in my thoughts, I paused, watching the swallows; for they seemed to me the symbol, in their swift, sure curvetting, all

daring and balance and surprise, of the delicate poise and motion of Art, that visits no two men alike, in a world where no two things of all the things there be, are quite the same.

Yes—I thought—and this Art is the one form of human energy in the whole world, which really works for union, and destroys the barriers between man and man. It is the continual, unconscious replacement, however fleeting, of oneself by another; the real cement of human life; the everlasting refreshment and renewal. For, what is grievous, dompting, grim, about our lives is that we are shut up within ourselves, with an itch to get outside ourselves. And to be stolen away from ourselves by Art is a momentary relaxation from that itching, a minute's profound, and as it were secret, enfranchisement. The active amusements and relaxations of life can only rest certain of our faculties, by indulging others; the whole self is never rested save through that unconsciousness of self, which comes through rapt contemplation of Nature or of Art.

And suddenly I remembered that some believe that Art does not produce unconsciousness of self, but rather very vivid self-realisation.

Ah! but—I thought—that is not the first and instant effect of Art; the new impetus is the after

effect of that momentary replacement of oneself by the self of the work before us; it is surely *the result* of that brief span of enlargement, enfranchisement, and rest.

Yes, Art is the great and universal refreshment. For Art is never dogmatic; holds no brief for itself —you may take it or you may leave it. It does not force itself rudely where it is not wanted. It is reverent to all tempers, to all points of view. But it is wilful—the very wind in the comings and goings of its influence, an uncapturable fugitive, visiting our hearts at vagrant, sweet moments; since we often stand even before the greatest works of Art without being able quite to lose ourselves! That restful oblivion comes, we never quite know when—and it is gone! But when it comes, it is a spirit hovering with cool wings, blessing us from least to greatest, according to our powers; a spirit deathless and varied as human life itself.

And in what sort of age—I thought—are artists living now? Are conditions favourable? Life is very multiple; full of "movements," "facts," and "news"; with the limelight terribly turned on—and all this is adverse to the artist. Yet, leisure is abundant; the facilities for study great; Liberty is respected—more or less. But, there is one great reason why, in this age of

ours, Art, it seems, must flourish. For, just as cross-breeding in Nature—if it be not too violent—often gives an extra vitality to the offspring, so does cross-breeding of philosophies make for vitality in Art. I cannot help thinking that historians, looking back from the far future, will record this age as the Third Renaissance. We who are lost in it, working or looking on, can neither tell what we are doing, nor where standing; but we cannot help observing, that, just as in the Greek Renaissance, worn-out Pagan orthodoxy was penetrated by new philosophy; just as in the Italian Renaissance, Pagan philosophy, reasserting itself, fertilised again an already too inbred Christian creed; so now Orthodoxy fertilised by Science is producing a fresh and fuller conception of life—a love of Perfection, not for hope of reward, not for fear of punishment, but for Perfection's sake. Slowly, under our feet, beneath our consciousness, is forming that new philosophy, and it is in times of new philosophies that Art, itself in essence always a discovery, must flourish. Those whose sacred suns and moons are ever in the past, tell us that our Art is going to the dogs; and it is, indeed, true that we are in confusion! The waters are broken, and every nerve and sinew of the artist is strained to discover his own safety. It is an age

of stir and change, a season of new wine and old bottles. Yet, assuredly, in spite of breakages and waste, a wine worth the drinking is all the time being made.

I ceased again to think, for the sun had dipped low, and the midges were biting me; and the sounds of evening had begun, those innumerable far-travelling sounds of man and bird and beast—so clear and intimate—of remote countrysides at sunset. And for long I listened, too vague to move my pen.

New philosophy—a vigorous Art! Are there not all the signs of it? In music, sculpture, painting; in fiction—and drama; in dancing; in criticism itself, if criticism be an Art. Yes, we are reaching out to a new faith not yet crystallised, to a new Art not yet perfected; the forms still to find—the flowers still to fashion!

And how has it come, this slowly growing faith in Perfection for Perfection's sake? Surely like this: The Western world awoke one day to find that it no longer believed corporately and for certain in future life for the individual consciousness. It began to feel: I cannot say more than that there may be—Death may be the end of man, or Death may be nothing. And it began to ask itself in this uncertainty: Do I then desire to

go on living? Now, since it found that it desired to go on living at least as earnestly as ever it did before, it began to inquire why. And slowly it perceived that there was, inborn within it, a passionate instinct of which it had hardly till then been conscious—a sacred instinct to perfect itself, now, as well as in a possible hereafter; to perfect itself because Perfection was desirable, a vision to be adored, and striven for; a dream motive fastened within the Universe; the very essential Cause of everything. And it began to see that this Perfection, cosmically, was nothing but perfect Equanimity and Harmony; and in human relations, nothing but perfect Love and Justice. And Perfection began to glow before the eyes of the Western world like a new star, whose light touched with glamour all things as they came forth from Mystery, till to Mystery they were ready to return.

This—I thought—is surely what the Western world has dimly been rediscovering. There has crept into our minds once more the feeling that the Universe is all of a piece, Equipoise supreme; and all things equally wonderful, and mysterious, and valuable. We have begun, in fact, to have a glimmering of the artist's creed, that nothing may we despise or neglect—that everything is worth the

doing well, the making fair—that our God, Perfection, is implicit everywhere, and the revelation of Him the business of our Art.

And as I jotted down these words I noticed that some real stars had crept up into the sky, so gradually darkening above the pollard lime-trees; cuckoos, who had been calling on the thorn-trees all the afternoon, were silent; the swallows no longer flirted past, but a bat was already in career over the holly hedge; and round me the buttercups were closing. The whole form and feeling of the world had changed, so that I seemed to have before me a new picture hanging.

Ah! I thought—Art must indeed be priest of this new faith in Perfection, whose motto is: "Harmony, Proportion, Balance." For by Art alone can true harmony in human affairs be fostered, true Proportion revealed, and true Equipoise preserved. Is not the training of an artist a training in the due relation of one thing with another, and in the faculty of expressing that relation clearly; and, even more, a training in the faculty of disengaging from self the very essence of self —and passing that essence into other selves by so delicate means that none shall see how it is done, yet be insensibly unified? Is not the artist, of all men, foe and nullifier of partisanship and parochial-

ism, of distortions and extravagance, the discoverer of that jack-o'-lantern—Truth; for, if Truth be not Spiritual Proportion I know not what it is. Truth—it seems to me—is no absolute thing, but always relative, the essential symmetry in the varying relationships of life; and the most perfect truth is but the concrete expression of the most penetrating vision. Life seen throughout as a countless show of the finest works of Art; Life shaped, and purged of the irrelevant, the gross, and the extravagant; Life, as it were, spiritually selected—that is Truth; a thing as multiple, and changing, as subtle, and strange, as Life itself, and as little to be bound by dogma. Truth admits but the one rule: No deficiency, and no excess! Disobedient to that rule—nothing attains full vitality. And secretly fettered by that rule is Art, whose business is the creation of vital things.

That æsthete, to be sure, was right, when he said: "It is Style that makes one believe in a thing; nothing but Style." For, what is Style in its true and broadest sense save fidelity to idea and mood, and perfect balance in the clothing of them? And I thought: Can one believe in the decadence of Art in an age which, however unconsciously as yet, is beginning to worship that which Art worships—Perfection—Style?

The faults of our Arts to-day are the faults of zeal and of adventure, the faults and crudities of pioneers, the errors and mishaps of the explorer. They must pass through many fevers, and many times lose their way; but at all events they shall not go dying in their beds, and be buried at Kensal Green. And, here and there, amid the disasters and wreckage of their voyages of discovery, they will find something new, some fresh way of embellishing life, or of revealing the heart of things. That characteristic of to-day's Art—the striving of each branch of Art to burst its own boundaries—which to many spells destruction, is surely of happy omen. The novel straining to become the play, the play the novel, both trying to paint; music striving to become story; poetry gasping to be music; painting panting to be philosophy; forms, canons, rules, all melting in the pot; stagnation broken up! In all this havoc there is much to shock and jar even the most eager and adventurous. We cannot stand these new-fangled fellows! They have no form! They rush in where angels fear to tread. They have lost all the good of the old, and given us nothing in its place! And yet—only out of stir and change is born new salvation. To deny that is to deny belief in man, to turn our backs on courage! It is well, indeed, that some

should live in closed studies with the paintings and the books of yesterday—such devoted students serve Art in their own way. But the fresh-air world will ever want new forms. We shall not get them without faith enough to risk the old! The good will live, the bad will die; and to-morrow only can tell us which is which!

Yes—I thought—we naturally take a too impatient view of the Art of our own time, since we can neither see the ends toward which it is almost blindly groping, nor the few perfected creations that will be left standing amidst the rubble of abortive effort. An age must always decry itself and extol its forbears. The unwritten history of every Art will show us that. Consider the novel—that most recent form of Art! Did not the age which followed Fielding lament the treachery of authors to the Picaresque tradition, complaining that they were not as Fielding and Smollett were? Be sure they did. Very slowly and in spite of opposition did the novel attain in this country the fulness of that biographical form achieved under Thackeray. Very slowly, and in face of condemnation, it has been losing that form in favour of a greater vividness which places before the reader's brain, not historical statements, as it were, of motives and of facts, but word-paint-

ings of things and persons, so chosen and arranged that the reader may see, as if at first hand, the spirit of Life at work before him. The new novel has as many bemoaners as the old novel had when it was new. It is no question of better or worse, but of *differing* forms—of change dictated by gradual suitability to the changing conditions of our social life, and to the ever fresh discoveries of craftsmen, in the intoxication of which, old and equally worthy craftsmanship is—by the way—too often for the moment mislaid. The vested interests of life favour the line of least resistance—disliking and revolting against disturbance; but one must always remember that a spurious glamour is inclined to gather around what is new. And, because of these two deflecting factors, those who break through old forms must well expect to be dead before the new forms they have unconsciously created have found their true level, high or low, in the world of Art. When a thing is new—how shall it be judged? In the fluster of meeting novelty, we have even seen coherence attempting to bind together two personalities so fundamentally opposed as those of Ibsen and Bernard Shaw—dramatists with hardly a quality in common; no identity of tradition, or belief; not the faintest resemblance in methods of construction or tech-

nique. Yet contemporary estimate talks of them often in the same breath. They are new! It is enough. And others, as utterly unlike them both. They too are new. They have as yet no label of their own—then put on some one else's!

And so—I thought—it must always be; for Time is essential to the proper placing and estimate of all Art. And is it not this feeling, that contemporary judgments are apt to turn out a little ludicrous, which has converted much criticism of late from judgment pronounced into impression recorded—recreative statement—a kind, in fact, of expression of the critic's self, elicited through contemplation of a book, a play, a symphony, a picture? For this kind of criticism there has even recently been claimed an actual identity with creation. Æsthetic judgment and creative power identical! That is a hard saying. For, however sympathetic one may feel toward this new criticism, however one may recognise that the recording of impression has a wider, more elastic, and more lasting value than the delivery of arbitrary judgment based on rigid laws of taste; however one may admit that it approaches the creative gift in so far as it demands the qualities of receptivity and reproduction—is there not still lacking to this "new" critic something of that

thirsting spirit of discovery, which precedes the creation—hitherto so-called—of anything? Criticism, taste, æsthetic judgment, by the very nature of their task, wait till life has been focussed by the artists before they attempt to reproduce the image which that imprisoned fragment of life makes on the mirror of their minds. But a thing created springs from a germ unconsciously implanted by the direct impact of unfettered life on the whole range of the creator's temperament; and round the germ thus engendered, the creative artist—ever penetrating, discovering, selecting—goes on building cell on cell, gathered from a million little fresh impacts and visions. And to say that this is also exactly what the recreative critic does, is to say that the interpretative musician is creator in the same sense as is the composer of the music that he interprets. If, indeed, these processes be the same in kind, they are in degree so far apart that one would think the word creative unfortunately used of both. . . .

But this speculation—I thought—is going beyond the bounds of vagueness. Let there be some thread of coherence in your thoughts, as there is in the progress of this evening, fast fading into night. Return to the consideration of the nature and purposes of Art! And recognize that much of what

you have thought will seem on the face of it heresy to the school whose doctrine was incarnated by Oscar Wilde in that admirable apotheosis of half-truths: "The Decay of the Art of Lying." For therein he said: "No great artist ever sees things as they really are." Yet, that half-truth might also be put thus: The seeing of things as they really are—the seeing of a proportion veiled from other eyes (together with the power of expression), is what makes a man an artist. What makes him a great artist is a high fervour of spirit, which produces a superlative, instead of a comparative, clarity of vision.

Close to my house there is a group of pines with gnarled red limbs flanked by beech-trees. And there is often a very deep blue sky behind. Generally, that is all I see. But, once in a way, in those trees against that sky I seem to see all the passionate life and glow that Titian painted into his pagan pictures. I have a vision of mysterious meaning, of a mysterious relation between that sky and those trees with their gnarled red limbs and Life as I know it. And when I have had that vision I always feel, this is reality, and all those other times, when I have no such vision, simple unreality. If I were a painter, it is for such fervent vision I should wait, before moving brush. This, so intimate,

inner vision of reality, indeed, seems in duller moments wellnigh grotesque; and hence that other glib half-truth: "Art is greater than Life itself." Art *is*, indeed, greater than Life in the sense that the power of Art is the disengagement from Life of its real spirit and significance. But in any other sense, to say that Art is greater than Life from which it emerges, and into which it must remerge, can but suspend the artist over Life, with his feet in the air and his head in the clouds—Prig masquerading as Demi-god. "Nature is no great Mother who has borne us. She is our creation. It is in our brain that she quickens to life." Such is the highest hyperbole of the æsthetic creed. But what is creative instinct, if not an incessant living sympathy with Nature, a constant craving like that of Nature's own, to fashion something new out of all that comes within the grasp of those faculties with which Nature has endowed us? The qualities of vision, of fancy, and of imaginative power, are no more divorced from Nature, than are the qualities of common-sense and courage. They are rarer, that is all. But in truth, no one holds such views. Not even those who utter them. They are the rhetoric, the over-statement of half-truths, by such as wish to condemn what they call "Realism," without being tempera-

mentally capable of understanding what "Realism" really is.

And what—I thought—is Realism? What is the meaning of that word so wildly used? Is it descriptive of technique, or descriptive of the spirit of the artist; or both, or neither? Was Turgenev a realist? No greater poet ever wrote in prose, nor any one who more closely brought the actual shapes of men and things before us. No more fervent idealists than Ibsen and Tolstoy ever lived; and none more careful to make their people real. Were they realists? No more deeply fantastic writer can I conceive than Dosteievsky, nor any who has described actual situations more vividly. Was he a realist? The late Stephen Crane was called a realist. Than whom no more impressionistic writer ever painted with words. What then is the heart of this term still often used as an expression almost of abuse? To me, at all events—I thought—the words realism, realistic, have no longer reference to technique, for which the words naturalism, naturalistic, serve far better. Nor have they to do with the question of imaginative power—as much demanded by realism as by romanticism. For me, a realist is by no means tied to naturalistic technique—he may be poetic, idealistic, fantastic, impressionistic, anything but

—romantic; that, in so far as he is a realist, he cannot be. The word, in fact, characterises that artist whose temperamental preoccupation is with revelation of the actual inter-relating spirit of life, character, and thought, with a view to *enlighten* himself and others; as distinguished from that artist—whom I call romantic—whose temperamental purpose is invention of tale or design with a view to *delight* himself and others. It is a question of temperamental antecedent motive in the artist, and nothing more.

Realist — Romanticist! Enlightenment — Delight! That is the true apposition. To make a revelation—to tell a fairy-tale! And either of these artists may use what form he likes—naturalistic, fantastic, poetic, impressionistic. For it is not by the form, but by the purpose and mood of his art that he shall be known, as one or as the other. Realists indeed—including the half of Shakespeare that was realist—not being primarily concerned to amuse their audience, are still comparatively unpopular in a world made up for the greater part of men of action, who instinctively reject all art that does not distract them without causing them to think. For thought makes demands on an energy already in full use; thought causes introspection; and introspection causes dis-

comfort, and disturbs the grooves of action. To say that the object of the realist is to enlighten rather than to delight, is not to say that in his art the realist is not amusing himself as much as ever is the teller of a fairy-tale, though he does not deliberately start out to do so; he is amusing, too, a large part of mankind. For, admitted that the object, and the test of Art, is always the awakening of vibration, of impersonal emotion, it is still usually forgotten that men fall, roughly speaking, into two flocks: Those whose intelligence is uninquiring in the face of Art, and does not demand to be appeased before their emotions can be stirred; and those who, having a speculative bent of mind, must first be satisfied by an enlightening quality in a work of Art, before that work of Art can awaken in them feeling. The audience of the realist is drawn from this latter type of man; the much larger audience of the romantic artist from the former; together with, in both cases, those fastidious few for whom all Art is style and only style, and who welcome either kind, so long as it is good enough.

To me, then—I thought—this division into Realism and Romance, so understood, is the main cleavage in all the Arts; but it is hard to find pure examples of either kind. For even the most de-

termined realist has more than a streak in him of the romanticist, and the most resolute romanticist finds it impossible at times to be quite unreal. Guido Reni, Watteau, Leighton—were they not perhaps somewhat pure romanticists; Rembrandt, Hogarth, Manet—mainly realists; Botticelli, Titian, Raphael, a blend. Dumas père, and Scott, surely romantic; Flaubert and Tolstoy as surely realists; Dickens and Cervantes, blended. Keats and Swinburne—romantic; Browning and Whitman—realistic; Shakespeare and Goethe, both. The Greek dramatists—realists. The Arabian Nights and Malory—romantic. The Iliad, the Odyssey, and the Old Testament, both realism and romance. And if in the vagueness of my thoughts I were to seek for illustration less general and vague to show the essence of this temperamental cleavage in all Art, I would take the two novelists Turgenev and Stevenson. For Turgenev expressed himself in stories that must be called romances, and Stevenson employed almost always a naturalistic technique. Yet no one would ever call Turgenev a romanticist, or Stevenson a realist. The spirit of the first brooded over life, found in it a perpetual voyage of spiritual adventure, was set on discovering and making clear to himself and all, the varying traits and emotions

of human character—the varying moods of Nature; and though he couched all this discovery in caskets of engaging story, it was always clear as day what mood it was that drove him to dip pen in ink. The spirit of the second, I think, almost dreaded to discover; he felt life, I believe, too keenly to want to probe into it; he spun his gossamer to lure himself and all away from life. That was his driving mood; but the craftsman in him, longing to be clear and poignant, made him more natural, more actual than most realists.

So, how thin often is the hedge! And how poor a business the partisan abuse of either kind of art in a world where each sort of mind has full right to its own due expression, and grumbling lawful only when due expression is not attained. One may not care for a Rembrandt portrait of a plain old woman; a graceful Watteau decoration may leave another cold—but foolish will he be who denies that both are faithful to their conceiving moods, and so proportioned part to part, and part to whole, as to have, each in its own way, that inherent rhythm or vitality which is the hall-mark of Art. He is but a poor philosopher who holds a view so narrow as to exclude forms not to his personal taste. No realist can love romantic Art so much as he loves his own, but when that Art ful-

fils the laws of its peculiar being, if he would be no blind partisan, he must admit it. The romanticist will never be amused by realism, but let him not for that reason be so parochial as to think that realism, when it achieves vitality, is not Art. For what is Art but the perfected expression of self in contact with the world; and whether that self be of enlightening, or of fairy-telling temperament, is of no moment whatsoever. The tossing of abuse from realist to romanticist and back is but the sword-play of two one-eyed men with their blind side turned toward each other. Shall not each attempt be judged on its own merits? If found not shoddy, faked, or forced, but true to itself, true to its conceiving mood, and fair-proportioned part to whole, so that it *lives*—then, realistic or romantic, in the name of Fairness let it pass! Of all kinds of human energy, Art is surely the most free, the least parochial; and demands of us an essential tolerance of all its forms. Shall we waste breath and ink in condemnation of artists, because their temperaments are not our own?

But the shapes and colours of the day were now all blurred; every tree and stone entangled in the dusk. How different the world seemed from that in which I had first sat down, with the swallows flirting past. And my mood was different; for

each of those worlds had brought to my heart its proper feeling—painted on my eyes the just picture. And Night, that was coming, would bring me yet another mood that would frame itself with consciousness at its own fair moment, and hang before me. A quiet owl stole by in the field below, and vanished into the heart of a tree. And suddenly above the moor-line I saw the large moon rising. Cinnamon-coloured, it made all things swim, made me uncertain of my thoughts, vague with mazy feeling. Shapes seemed but drifts of moon-dust, and true reality nothing save a sort of still listening to the wind. And for long I sat, just watching the moon creep up, and hearing the thin, dry rustle of the leaves along the holly hedge. And there came to me this thought: What is this Universe—that never had beginning and will never have an end—but a myriad striving to perfect pictures never the same, so blending and fading one into another, that all form one great perfected picture? And what are we—ripples on the tides of a birthless, deathless, equipoised Creative Purpose—but little works of Art?

Trying to record that thought, I noticed that my note-book was damp with dew. The cattle were lying down. It was too dark to see.

1911.

DATE DUE

ESSAY &
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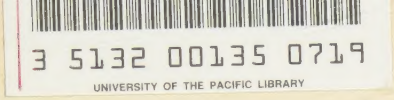
INDEX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INDEX

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